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**THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN NEW YORK IN THE
YEARS OF THE DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II**

BY

JINGYI SONG

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy, The City University of New York**

2000

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ABSTRACT

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN NEW YORK IN THE YEARS OF THE DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II

by

Jingyi Song

Adviser: Professor Dolores Greenberg

This study shows how the Great Depression and World War II affected the lives of New York's Chinese Americans and how different Chinese interest groups reacted to specific situations thereby transforming New York's Chinese community. I emphasize the conscious decisions of Chinese New Yorkers, particularly those of the younger generation, that helped to form the new dual identity: Chinese Americans.

Like other racial minorities, the Chinese in New York experienced sanctions, segregation, prejudice, and discrimination. However, in contrast to the traditional view that portrays Chinese as the passive victims of exclusion institutionalized by the Chinese Exclusion Law of 1882, I emphasize their persistent resistance to racial inequality. The Depression was an historical turning point for New York's Chinese laborers, small businessmen, students, and women, who began to organize and participate in

mainstream activities. The rapid growth of self-reliant and self-determined organizations, and their involvement in political, cultural and social activities at large demonstrated their shifting attitudes towards their place in American society. Engagement rather than disengagement became their major strategy and means of claiming the civil rights due them as American citizens.

World War II promoted change. Identity gained as Chinese Americans during the Depression was reinforced when Japan invaded China in 1937 and attacked the United States in 1941. This dissertation also explores the experiences and activities of New York's Chinese in the war time; dual ethnic identity was demonstrated by support for both China and the United States. I reject the accepted explanation of the passage of the Repeal Bill of 1943, which emphasizes American desire to keep China as an ally and to combat Japanese war propaganda. I found that the Chinese Americans efforts contributed greatly to the passage of the Repeal Bill.

My conclusion also differs from the accepted scholarship which considers the 1960's as the period when a "new" Chinese immigrant community emerged as a result of the federal immigration law of 1965. I show that the participation of New York's Chinese in mainstream political, cultural and social activities in the 1930's created New Chinese immigrant community and fundamentally altered the traditional means by which social control was exercised.

TO MY FATHER, PROFESSOR JINGYING SONG WHO ENCOURAGED ME TO FULFILL
MY GOAL BUT NEVER GOT THE CHANCE TO SEE MY WORK

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INTRODUCTION

According to the most recent historical scholarship, the emergence of a "new" Chinese immigrant community in New York City dates from the federal immigration law of 1965 which lifted restrictive quota provisions.¹ College graduates and technical personnel comprised a large portion of the influx of new Chinese immigrants.² Their educational sophistication and technical skills, it is said, enabled them to adapt themselves to modern American society and to inject a dynamic element that significantly changed the community they found in New York City.³

¹ Bill Ong Hing, Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy 1850-1990 (California: Stanford University Press, 1993); Jan Lin, Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Sucheng Chan, Asian Americans: An Interpretive History (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991)

² Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, The Chinese Experience in America (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 195.; Bernard Wong, "The Chinese: New Immigrants in New York's Chinatown," in New Immigrants in New York, ed. Nancy Foner (1987), 246.; Pyong Gap Min, Asian Americans Contemporary Trends and Issues (New York: Sage Publications, 1995)

³ Sue Fawn Chung, "Fighting for Their American Rights," in Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities During the Exclusion Era, ed. K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 119.; Also see Herbert R. Barringer, Robert W. Gardner, and Michael J. Levin, Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1993), 37-38; Leon F. Birvoer and

Few studies have investigated the Chinese community of the 1930's and 1940's, when the groundwork for the dramatic transformation of the 1960's and 1970's was actually laid.

This study will focus on the remaking of the Chinese community in New York City from the Depression years to the end of World War II. Daniel J. Elazar suggests that community "is an exceedingly complex organism. It is not a highly integrated structure but a loosely knit system of institutions, organizations, groups, families, and individuals whose roles and areas of concerns are relatively specialized, often overlapping, and not infrequently shifting."⁴ Benjamin B. Ringer and Elinor R. Lawless believe that the formation of an ethnic community is a distinctive societal phenomenon. They see community as a consequence of the interplay of power, polity, and policies of the larger society imposed upon racial minorities. Membership in an ethnic group is "primarily a function of birth--a matter of ascription rather than of voluntary choice."⁵ Emphasizing the shared belief system and common national

Anthony J. Agresta, "The Future Asian Population of the United States," in Pacific Bridges: The New Immigration From Asian and the Pacific Islands, ed. James T. Fawcett and Benjamin V. Carino (Staten Island, N.Y.: Center for Migration Studies, 1987)

⁴ Daniel J. Elazar, Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980), 9

⁵ Benjamin B. Ringer and Elinor R. Lawless, Race-Ethnicity and Society (New York & London, Routledge, 1989), 5

origin, Ringer and Lawless apply the theories of "we-ness" and "they-ness" to analyze the dynamics within an ethnic community and the impact of the political-economic order of society upon ethnic communities.

I find these theories useful as I am particularly interested in exploring the diversity of experiences among different interest groups of the Chinese in New York City and how their changing perspectives contributed to transformations in the attitudes of the larger non-Asian community. Among the questions I will address, for example, are: what changes and continuities occurred within the city's Chinese community in the years of the Depression and World War II contributing to its transformation? How did different groups of Chinese react in these years to the persistent discrimination perpetuated in American society? Racism was rooted in the Anglo-Saxon white supremacist culture of the United States. Social scientists have shown how it penetrated the life of Americans. Like other racial minorities, the Chinese in New York experienced sanctions, segregation, prejudice, and discrimination. They were racially labelled as Mongolians, a yellow menace and heathens. However, they did not passively accept the stamp of racial inferiority. Instead, they resisted.

I will investigate the experiences of Chinese New Yorkers in their varied struggles for racial equality. I will also examine

the development of institutions created by the Chinese to integrate themselves into mainstream activities as a means of claiming their rights as American citizens. This institutional analysis will demonstrate how second generation immigrants' conscious decisions regarding their future in a hostile environment helped to form a new dual identity for themselves and change the way other New Yorkers saw them.

The Chinese community in New York City has been a social mosaic since its formation in the 1840's. Sailors and merchants, together with a labor force that either came from Cuba, Peru, and Canada or remained after the completion of the first transcontinental railways in the 1860's, made up a large part of the pioneer generation. Scholars and professionals constituted the gentry that provided community leadership as they had at home.

Seeking opportunities and a better life, these people worked hard to attain their goals. However, the hostile political and social climate, specifically the 1882 Exclusion Law that barred Chinese immigrants from entering this country and prohibited their naturalization on the basis of race made it difficult, sometimes impossible, for them to achieve their goals. Excluded by society, many preferred to staying in their own ethnic enclave for self-protection.

For decades after the enforcement of the Exclusion Law, New

York's Chinese, like the Chinese in cities in the West, fought for their survival as well as for legal recognition of equality in this country. They filed civil suits against the unequal treatment. They participated in demonstrations to ensure that their protests would be publicly heard. The shared experience of being Chinese and living under the shadow of the Chinese Exclusion Law brought Chinese of different ages and classes together to fight for racial equality.

Before the 1930's, struggles for justice had traditionally been confined within the frame of the elite in the Chinese community. When the Great Depression plagued the country, demands for change took a completely different course. Traditionally, New York's Chinese had turned to charitable organizations and local district associations for help during hard times. The Great Depression was so severe and persistent that traditional ethnic institutions could not meet the needs of thousands of people who had lost their businesses and jobs. Instead, desperate unemployed laborers, restaurant workers, and self-employed laundrymen organized to protect their interests. The formation of labor organizations such as the Lien Yi Society and the Chinese Unemployed Council and small business associations such as the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance and the Chinese American Restaurant Association of Greater New York were new to the Chinese community. Independent of elite control and local district affiliations, these

groups challenged longstanding Chinese community authorities.

In their efforts to survive, these new organizations integrated their activities into the larger society. The creation of labor alliances with other American labor unions and the demands of Chinese small businessmen for equality demonstrated their desire for change. The activities of New York's Chinese labor organizations, in particular, resulted in the development of a new class-consciousness. As importantly, the Chinese in New York called for government relief during the Depression, indicating a growing awareness of both the government's role in aiding the needy and their own right as citizens to request such assistance.

New York's Chinese had been forced to withdraw into their own community to protect themselves from unnecessary risks since the enforcement of the Chinese Exclusion Law of 1882. Their reactions and activities in the Depression demonstrated shifting attitudes toward society. In coping with prejudice and hostility, the 1930's marked a turning point from isolation to involvement.

My study points to the importance of a politically mature second generation's influence from the 1930's. The younger generation of Chinese Americans saw the United States as "the land of the free and the home of the brave," but the realities of racial intolerance intruded upon their dreams and efforts to improve their lives. They were stereotyped, lumped together as opium smokers, cheap labor, and filthy heathens who ate rats and cats. The

Depression made it even more difficult for them to survive.

After repeated rejection of their status as Americans, the young increasingly turned to political participation as a means of protection against discrimination. Growing political consciousness accounts for such organizations as the New York Chinese American Voting League and the Chinese American Citizens Alliance and their significant participation in local and national political activities. Their involvement in both the 1932 and the 1936 presidential campaigns demonstrated their insistence on political democracy and their intention to be included in the system.

Gloria H. Chun's recent writing about Chinese American identity issues in the 1930's concluded that racism alienated Chinese Americans and reinforced their identity as Chinese rather than American.⁶ By contrast, my examination shows a desire for racial equality as they pursued recognition as Americans. In addition to participating in mainstream politics, young Chinese New Yorkers also involved themselves in social and educational activities as a means of self-expression and as a way of shaping their dual Chinese American identity. Evidence of their growing self-awareness can be found in the cultural and educational activities of clubs such as Ging Hawk Club and the Chinese Athletic

⁶ Gloria H. Chun, "'Go West ... To China': Chinese American Identity in the 1930's," K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, ed., Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities During the Exclusion Era (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 174

Club; essay contests, musical performances, art exhibitions, and bilingual Chinese and English language learning programs. Team sports, especially those that required opponents, provided a new mode of contact between Chinese American youths and other ethnic groups. The principle of "Play to win" encouraged both pride in their Chinese heritage and confidence in integrating themselves into society as Americans.

Identity gained as Chinese Americans during the Depression paralleled international events of the 1930's that also contributed to a newly found dual sense of identity. Identification with their ethnic heritage escalated from 1937 when Japan invaded China. Support turned to a movement for China's military defense. During the eight years from 1937 to 1945, New York's Chinese contributed \$56 million to civilian relief work in China. They established military personnel training institutions in New York and Chinese American volunteers went to the war front.

In the studies on the Chinese American search for identity, Him Mark Lai and Shih-shan Henry Tsai maintain that the enthusiastic support for China's defense came out of the desire to have a strong nation to back overseas Chinese.⁷ However, my evidence reveals the need for a different, more inclusive

⁷ H. M. Lai, The Chinese of America:1785-1980 (San Francisco, Chinese Cultural Foundation, 1980); Shih-shan Henry Tsai, The Chinese Experience in America, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986)

perspective. We need to take into account that Chinese Americans joined the American military to fight against imperial expansion and for democracy. A dual ethnic identity is a more accurate explanation of support for both China and the United States. After two and three generations, the Chinese in the United States developed strong patriotic feelings for the land where they lived and worked. War activities for both the United States and China also contributed to the cohesion of New York's Chinese community, exemplified in the work of organizations such as the Chinese Anti-Imperialist Alliance and the Chinese War Relief Association of America.

World War II provided the opportunity to intensify efforts to repeal the Exclusion Law and legalize the status of all Chinese immigrants. Particularly important, and not part of the accepted story, was the role I found of Chinese American women, typically stereotyped as passive and obedient. In fact, they took the lead in intensified lobbying efforts. Their organization, the Chinese Women's Association of New York, initiated a campaign to lobby Congress for the repeal of Chinese Exclusion Law. During the war, they assumed nontraditional roles: in addition to their activities to raise money in support of both the Chinese and American war efforts, Chinese women joined the American Army.

In 1943, Congress passed the repeal bill that terminated the sixty-one years of Chinese exclusion legislation. Here too, my

position differs from the accepted scholarship, which claims that the repeal bill of 1943 was a consequence of American war considerations to combat Japanese war propaganda and to keep China as America's war ally.⁸ No one has explored the efforts of New York's ordinary Chinese Americans. Their commitment to racial equality and their dedication to the American war effort also contributed to the repeal, and in the process changed the attitude of Americans. American organizations were established to support the Chinese. When the war was over, New York's Chinese were no longer viewed as docile, apolitical or uncommunicative. Instead, they had established themselves as loyal and valuable members of society and had altered mainstream perception.

As I have said, the Great Depression and World War II provided a tremendous impetus for the Chinese in New York to realize their goals of integrating themselves into mainstream American life as citizens. But it was the Chinese themselves who finally brought change.

This dissertation consists of six chapters. The first chapter provides background information. It examines the formation and experiences of the Chinese community in New York prior to the

⁸ John W. Dower, War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986); Fred Riggs, Pressures on Congress: A Study of the Repeal of Chinese Exclusion (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1950)

Exclusion Law of 1882. I also investigate how racism created and perpetuated the isolation of New York's Chinese. I detail how segregation and discrimination were inextricably linked in their experience from the 1880's to the 1930's.

Chapter 2 describes Chinese unemployment in New York in the years of the Great Depression. It also discusses the responses of New York's Chinese, particularly the newly founded labor unions and small businessmen's associations to the devastating situation. One of the consequences of their efforts as I establish was the decline of the traditional structure of the Chinese community as people took more responsibilities for the welfare of their own.

Chapters 3 and 4 seek to understand the impact of the Depression on the second generation of Chinese immigrants. Economic hardship intensified racial discrimination. As a consequence, they found it difficult to get jobs in a society where they were stereotyped as aliens. The findings of these two chapters demonstrate their awareness of the intensified racial discrimination and how they were actively involved in mainstream political and cultural events as a means of protesting racial inequality. Chapter 3 focuses on their organized cultural activities in search of Chinese American identities, while chapter 4 emphasizes their growing political consciousness demonstrated in their active participation in federal and local elections as a means of claiming their rights as American citizens.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine the experiences of New York's Chinese in the war years before and after Pearl Harbor. I argue that their support of China in war time reflected their dual identity of being both Chinese and Americans. Like other ethnic groups, Chinese Americans appealed for support of their country of origin. As we will see they participated in varied organized activities in support of China's military defense and they raised money for civilian relief. As Chinese Americans, they joined American military forces to defend this country. I also examine their participation in war time production. I argue that their contributions to the war front and to the home front eventually brought up the issue of the Chinese Exclusion Laws for reconsideration. I conclude by relating the active participation of the Chinese in New York during the war years to the national movement for racial equality that resulted in new federal legislation.

The conclusion summarizes the themes based on my findings of the ways in which the Depression and Second World War created the momentum for Chinese Americans to break down the barriers of exclusion. Engagement rather than disengagement in American society became a major shift in the political behavior of Chinese Americans in New York. This political strategy assisted the growing consciousness of Chinese Americans and brought them together to improve the life of the Chinese community in New York.

The reader should keep in mind that New York's Chinese lived in different geographic locations such as Brooklyn and Queens, not just in "Chinatown" as is sometimes implied. Therefore, when I use the term "Chinese community" I do not refer to the population in geographic connotation equivalence in discussing this ethnic group. For the "second generation Chinese immigrants," I mean the generation born in the United States around the 1910's and 1920's to distinguish them from foreign-born Chinese.

Many of the primary sources for my research were in Chinese and I have used Pingyin, a popular phonetic system for the translation of names and geographic locations. But I also keep some popular names as they were translated according to the Wade-Giles phonetic system more familiar to English readers.

CHAPTER I

NEW YORK'S CHINESE COMMUNITY BEFORE THE 1930'S

It has been over 150 years since Chinese immigrants first settled in New York City. This chapter provides background information on their early community experiences here. It examines, in brief, the period from the 1840's to the Exclusion Act of 1882 to demonstrate the diversity of Chinese migration from such places as the American West, Canada, and South America. My purpose, as in the remainder of this thesis, is to undermine stereotypes. The Chinese who came to New York City were searching for economic opportunities, and they were not coolies, cheap laborers, opium smokers, or gangsters as they have often been depicted. I argue that racism created and perpetuated isolation for New York's Chinese, especially after the Exclusion Act of 1882. However, unlike traditional portraits of the Chinese as victims, I present their strategies of resistance against segregation and discrimination from as early as 1882.

Community Building in the 19th Century

People from many lands have settled in the United States. New York City, with its cosmopolitan population, has been a symbol of

the nation as a land of immigrants. By the middle of the nineteenth century, it had become a preeminent American manufacturing, commercial and financial center with an increasingly diverse population.⁹

Immigrants to New York City from the world outside brought with them varied hopes and expectations, diverse skills and cultural heritages. As newcomers, they tended to stay close to their own ethnic groups for mutual support in a unfamiliar environment. The Chinese, like the early Irish and Germans, founded their community in a 3-block area along Doyer, Cherry, and Mott Streets on Manhattan's Lower East Side in the 1840's.¹⁰

Unlike farmers from Guangdong, China, who migrated to the West Coast, the pioneer Chinese immigrants to New York City were sailors, indentured laborers who had escaped from Cuba and Peru,

⁹For the history of New York City, see Edwin Burrous and Mike Wallace, Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Thomas Muller, Immigrants and the American City (New York: New York University Press, 1993) is an informative history book about immigrants in American cities.

¹⁰ Historical findings of early New York's Chinese immigrants can be found in number of scholars' publications from the late nineteenth century through the present. See Louis J. Beck, New York's Chinatown, An Historical Presentation of Its People and Places (New York: Bohemia Publishing Company, 1898); Alvin F. Harlow, Old Bowery Days (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1931); and S.W. Kung, Chinese in American Life: Some Aspects of Their History, Status, Problems, and Contributions (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962). A recent book, Sons of the Yellow Emperor: History of the Chinese Diaspora by Lynn Pan, (New York: Kodansha International, 1994) also covers some information on early New York's Chinese experiences.

and merchants who had lived in other places in the United States before coming to New York. Scholars and professionals also figured among these early settlers.¹¹

In 1850, the New York Times estimated that some 150 Chinese lived around Cherry Street.¹² Three decades later, 500 Chinese lived in New York.¹³ The 1868 Burlingame Treaty between the United States and China allowed legal status as citizens for those Chinese who wanted to stay and change their "home and allegiance" whether from "curiosity, for trade, or to become permanent residents." The completion of the transcontinental railroads accounted for the growth of the Chinese population. The hostile situation in the West that forced the Chinese to move to the East to look for safer places was also an important factor for the influx of Chinese immigrants into New York.

The growth of New York's economy provided Chinese immigrants with opportunities. They worked as cooks, street peddlers,

¹¹ Loren Fessler, Chinese in America: Stereotyped Past, Changing Present (New York: Vantage, 1983), 6; Mike Berger, "New York Chinatown, Chinese Chamber of Commerce of New York, 50th Anniversary Issue (New York, 1957), 28; John Kuo Wei Tchen, "New York Chinese: The Nineteenth-Century Pre-Chinatown Settlement," Chinese America" History and Perspectives, (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1990), 3

¹² Hsian-shui Chen and John Kuo Wei Tchen, "Towards a History of Chinese in Queens", Asian/American Center Working Papers (New York: Asian/American Center, Queens College, CUNY, 1989), 2

¹³ New York Tribune, June 21, 1885

merchants, farmers, and domestic servants. The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) was established to meet the needs of the larger population and to settle disputes and conflicts over business and personal issues as more Chinese settled in New York. Prominent merchants and elite scholars assumed leadership of the Association. The CCBA became known as "the government of Chinatown" in the 1870's since its principles and policies dominated social, economic, and political life within the ethnic community.

New York's Chinatown reflected the growth of the early small retail food and notions stores. In 1878, Yuet Sing opened his grocery store at 10 Chatham Square, selling Chinese wines, dried vegetables, preserved sugared fruits, and grains shipped from China to meet the needs of the growing Chinese population.¹⁴ Wo Kee opened its door for business at 8 Mott Street in the same year to sell assorted articles of daily use. The New York Tribune in 1885 told of Ah Sue, a Chinese resident at 62 Cherry Street, who started a small tobacco and candy store.¹⁵ while Ah Ken opened a little cigar

¹⁴ Mike Berger, "New York Chinatown" Chinese Chambers of Commerce of New York, Inc. 50th Anniversary, 1957, 30

¹⁵ Ah Sue moved to New York in 1847. A year later, he met an Irish girl named Murphy and married her. He had a small tobacco and candy store to make a living. The New York Tribune, June 21, 1885

store on Chatham Street.¹⁶

In addition to retail stores, service trades also emerged to serve the needs of the increasing number of Chinese residents in New York. In 1885, An Ken started a small boarding house for the convenience of Chinese sailors who stopped in New York.¹⁷ A number of barber shops and restaurants opened for business, as well.¹⁸ By the mid-1890's, the former narrow and curving Mott Street became a commercial center. An American journalist recalled that, along the street, "the lower floor of every building houses a business of some sort."¹⁹ "Numerous novelty shops, with all sorts of Chinese... embroidered wares,... robes,... chop-sticks, dishes, tea-sets,..dolls..." became an attraction to visitors from sight-seeing buses.²⁰

¹⁶ Alvin Harlow, Old Bowery Days, 392

Other stores were also opened during this period. For example, the Lee family opened a Chinese grocery, "Chinaware shop", at 32 Mott Street in 1891. Soy Dee opened a little store at 7-9 Mott Street. Ann, "Chinatown," New York City Guide: Chinese in New York, Racial Groupings In New York, March 16, 1936, WPA Federal Writers' Project, Folder# 50, New York's Municipal Archives, Microfilm

¹⁷ Ann, "Chinatown," New York City Guide: Chinese in New York, Racial Groupings In New York, March 16, 1936, WPA Federal Writers' Project, Folder# 50, New York's Municipal Archives, Microfilm

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Konrad Bercovici, Around the World in New York (New York: The Century Co. 1921), 105

²⁰ Ibid

While it is true, according to my research, that early Chinese immigrants lived within the area of Chatham Square, Mott, Doyer, and Pell Streets, by the 1890's, most lived elsewhere. In 1890, only 2,500 of 13,000 Chinese lived in Chinatown, while 4,000 out of 18,000 Chinese lived there in 1898.²¹ By 1900, the number rose to 6,000, but an estimated 13,000 lived in other areas of the city.²² These statistics indicate that the majority of the Chinese did not live in an ethnic enclave. Even though the proportion of Chinese living in Chinatown increased from 19% in 1890 to 22% in 1898, it remained less than one quarter of all the Chinese in the New York City area.

The first generation Chinese immigrants were mainly young, single males. They were not bond or contract coolies, and came of their own free will. They might not have brought any preconceived plans or even wanted to settle permanently upon their arrival. But they were open to possibilities for a better life and showed evidence of a more permanent acculturation. Some married Irish

²¹ "The Chinese in New York City," Description: Present Distribution in New York, , NYC Unite, Racial Groups In New York, WPA Federal Writers' Project Roll# 66, Folder# 50, File 1635, 1, 1936, Microfilm; Emanuel Kanter, "Earliest Colonization and Original Habitat, Etc. of Chinese in New York," WPA Federal Writers' Project, Folder# 50, 2, 1936, Microfilm; Nathan Ausubel, "The Chinese in New York City," WPA Federal Writers' Project, Folder# 50, File 409181, 1, Microfilm

²² Report of the Office of Immigrant Affairs and the Population Analysis Division in New York City, 1900, Chantham Squire Public Library, Chinatown

girls;²³ others took Anglo-Christian names and became naturalized United States citizens.²⁴ However, in only two years between 1898 and 1900, the percentage of Chinese living within Chinatown increased to 32%. The rapid upward trend in the proportion of Chinese living within Chinatown suggests how the exclusion laws influenced demographic patterns. Increasing hostility forced the Chinese to stay close to each other for mutual support and protection.

In the Years of Exclusion Laws

On May 6, 1882, Congress enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act, which legally prohibited the Chinese from freely entering the United States. The Chinese Exclusion Act became the first national legislation that banned immigrants based on race. For decades

²³ George W. Walling, the New York Chief of Police, estimated that there were "15 Chinamen who had married to American women" by 1887. According to him, these Chinese were of "the progressive class...who have learned English and have abandoned all idea of returning to the Flowery Kingdom. ... The women in most cases have made excellent wives". George W. Walling, Recollection of a New York Chief of Police-An Official Record of 38 years as Patrol, Detective, Captain, Inspector and Chief of the New York Police (New York: Caxton Book Concer Limited, 1887), 428

²⁴ For more information see John Kuo Wei Tchen's article, "New York Chinese: The Nineteenth-Century Pre-Chinatown Settlement," in Chinese America: History and Perspectives (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, Asian American Studies, San Francisco State University, 1990), Vol. IV, 177

after the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, more laws and regulations were imposed to bar the Chinese from freely entering the United States and to deny the right of naturalization to those already in the country. The 1888 Scott Act prohibited over 20,000 Chinese from re-entering the United States, because their certificates of identity had been declared null and void when they had temporarily departed to visit their families in China. The 1892 Geary Act extended the 1882 Act for another 10 years, thereby continuing to prohibit the Chinese from entering the country. Moreover, it required the Chinese in the United States to register for certificates of residence that had never applied to other ethnic groups. The 1907 Act requiring an American woman who married a foreigner to take the nationality of her husband made it impossible for a Chinese to get citizenship through marriage. The quota system of the 1924 immigration law declared ineligible for citizenship of the Chinese already in the United States.

Restrictive state and local legislation across the country also excluded the Chinese from participating in social and economic activities. In some areas, they were segregated in schools and theaters. Barber shops, hotels, restaurants and other public facilities refused to provide services. Property owners signed restrictive covenants to keep the Chinese from buying homes or moving into certain neighborhoods. In a number of states, such as Arizona and Washington, legislation forbade Chinese from buying

land. Local laws prohibiting the Chinese from marrying "whites" were also enforced. In some places, innocent Chinese immigrants were killed in anti-Chinese riots. For example, during an attack on the Chinatown area in Rock Springs, Wyoming in 1885, twenty-eight Chinese were killed and another fifteen were wounded. Others suffered tremendous losses at the hands of rampaging mobs.²⁵ In 1886, riots and fires in Tacoma, Seattle forced the Chinese from their homes.²⁶

Many Chinese immigrants left the United States as riots continued. The U.S. Bureau of Census reported that 10,366 Chinese left the United States in 1882 alone.²⁷ There was no indication of arrivals that year. In the years following 1882, Chinese immigrants continuously departed in larger numbers: 12,157 left in 1883; 14,145 in 1884; 19,655 in 1885.²⁸ Enforcement of the restrictive legislation sharply reduced the Chinese population in

²⁵ The sufferings of Chinese immigrants in the United States during the riots are well presented in Jack Chen, The Chinese of America (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980); Him Mark Lai, The Chinese of America 1780-1980: An Illustrated History (San Francisco: Chinese American Organization, 1980)

²⁶ S.W. Kung, Chinese in American Life (Seattle, University of Washington, 1962), 90

²⁷ U.S. Bureau of Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945, Washington D.C. 1949; Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, The Chinese Experience in America (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 194

²⁸ Ibid

the United States from 104,455 in 1880 to 89,863 in 1900.²⁹

For almost a century, historians and scholars have sought to explain the causes and consequences of restrictive immigration legislation. Mary R. Coolidge suggested in 1909 that cultural ignorance and prejudice distorted the possibility of an American understanding of the Chinese, which eventually resulted in antagonism.³⁰ Later works of John Higham on nativism,³¹ and Stuart C. Miller's books about the stereotyped images of Chinese immigrants also present a cultural explanation of the causes of the exclusion laws.³² Both Gunther Barth and Alexander Saxton seek economic explanations, suggesting that economic crisis and the panic that ensued contributed significantly to the rejection by American labor of the Chinese. The myth of coolies also helped bring about restrictive legislation.³³

²⁹ Betty Song, Mountain of Gold- The Chinese in America (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), 320

³⁰ Mary Coolige, Chinese Immigrants (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1909, 1968)

³¹ John Higham, Strangers in the Land Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1963)

³² Stuart C. Miller, The Unwelcome Immigrants-The American Image of the Chinese 1785-1882 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1969)

³³ Gunther Barth, Bitter Strength-A History of Chinese in the United States 1850-1870 (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1964); Alexander Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy Labor & the Anti-Chinese Movement in California (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977)

Historians, such as Delber L. McKee and Alexander Saxton also argue that racial prejudice and racist views of "debased Mongolian" and "heathen Chinese" were deeply rooted in the culture of white supremacy in the United States and played an important role in Americans' hostile reception of the Chinese.³⁴ Political corruption in American government, scholars concur, contributed to the passage of the Chinese exclusion legislation, as well. Politicians who were scrambling for power used anti-Chinese sentiment to push for the passage of the Exclusion Act.³⁵

Despite the social hostility and political antagonism, most Chinese immigrants remained. How did the Chinese survive hardship in these years of exclusion and what efforts did they make to enable them to survive? Although those who chose to stay suffered from hostility, they did not distance themselves from society. Instead, they denounced the discriminatory legislation and fought to regain their constitutional right to live and to work in their adopted land.

³⁴ Delber L. McKee argues that the exclusion laws had been a national racial policy towards Chinese as the laws excluded all Chinese rather than only laborers. See McKee, Chinese Exclusion Versus the Open Door Policy 1900-1906 Clashes Over China Policy in the Roosevelt Era (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977), 24; Alexander Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy Labor & the Anti-Chinese Movement in California (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977)

³⁵ Him Mark, Lai, The Chinese of American 1780-1980: An Illustrated History and Catalog of the Exhibition (1980)

FIGHTING IN COURT

One important campaign in the Chinese immigrants' struggle for justice was fought in court. Like other Americans, they pursued racial equality through the judiciary process. Over 9,200 Chinese immigrants filed cases against the exclusion laws between 1882-1905.³⁶ In 1886, Yick Wo, a small laundry businessman in San Francisco, filed his case in the U.S. Supreme Court against a San Francisco Laundry Ordinance, arguing that the ordinance prohibited him from practicing his job and violated his civil rights.³⁷ In 1887, Chae Chaping brought his case to the Supreme Court, charging that the American immigration agency's refusal to let him reenter the United States after his short visit to China was unconstitutional, because he had resided in the United States for a dozen years from 1875 to 1887 before he left for China.³⁸

³⁶ Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, The Chinese Experience in America, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 79

³⁷ The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that San Francisco Laundry Ordinance violated the civil rights of a Chinese laundryman by denying him equal protection under the law in the case of Yick Wo vs. Hopkins. Ibid

³⁸ Chae Chaping's case was settled in 1889 by the United States Supreme Court. He was denied the right of reentry into this country, because the Supreme Court held that the Scott Act was constitutional.

On September 3, 1888, Mr. William L. Scott of Pennsylvania, Chairman of the National Democratic Campaign Committee, introduced a bill to the House of Representatives to further ban Chinese immigrants. On October 1, this bill was signed into law.

In 1893, only a few months after the passage of the Geary Act, three Chinese immigrants, Fong Yue Ting, Lee Joe, and Wong Quan challenged the restrictive law which required Chinese laborers in the United States to register and to obtain certificates of lawful residence.³⁹ They charged in the Supreme Court that the requirement for Chinese immigrants to carry an identity certificate was unconstitutionally selective. They lost their cases as the Court upheld the constitutionality of the registration law. The fight of Chinese immigrants for racial equality continued.

In 1900, Mrs. Gue Lim sued the United States, arguing that American refusal of her entry into the United States as the wife of a Chinese merchant violated the American protection of Chinese merchants in the United States provided by the 1880 treaty. After years of persistent struggle, she won her case and was granted

It provided that Chinese laborers who left the United States were not permitted to return and that all certificates of identity for temporary visits abroad were declared null and void. The Scott Act effectively excluded over 20,000 Chinese who had temporarily departed to visit their families or relatives in China.

³⁹ On May 5, 1892, a restrictive law, the Geary Act, was passed in Congress. The new law was more restrictive than anything preceding it. It had the effect of bearing heavily upon Chinese Americans. It not only extended the 1882 Act for another 10 years; but also required the Chinese in the United States to carry a certificate as a proof of their lawful residence. Imprisonment and deportation were the penalties for those who failed to have or carry a certificate. This law had never applied to other ethnic immigrant groups. The enforcement of these restrictive legislation sharply reduced the Chinese population in the United States from 104,455 in 1880 down to 89,863 in 1900.

permission to join her husband.⁴⁰

The Supreme Court rulings were both supportive and suppressive as we have seen in the Gue Lim case and the Fong Yue Ting case as examples. However, seeking court decisions became an important measure of the Chinese to protect their civil rights in the United States.

RALLIES, PETITIONS, AND ORGANIZATIONS

Court actions for justice clearly demonstrated Chinese immigrants' determination in their pursuit of racial equality and freedom. In addition to court cases, Chinese immigrants also expressed their opposition to restrictive legislation publicly. They participated in mass demonstrations and rallies demanding equal treatment for Chinese immigrants. The New York Tribune reported one such event on its front page: on June 15, 1901, 15,000 Chinese rallied in Chinatown to condemn the restrictive laws.⁴¹ By the end of the rally, the participants were in such high spirits that most of them signed a petition directed to the federal

⁴⁰ In the case of Mrs. Gue Lim vs. United States, the Supreme Court ruled that the wives and minor children of Chinese merchants in the United States were permitted to enter this country, because the 1880 treaty protected them.

In 1880, the United States and China modified the Burlingame Treaty of 1868. Article V of the Burlingame Treaty remained in the modified 1880 treaty. See Tsai, The Chinese Experience in America (1983), 7

⁴¹ The New York Tribune, June 15, 1901, 1

government demanding the immediate repeal of exclusion acts. During the rally, the participants also urged a joint effort of all Chinese in the United States to protest the violation of Chinese civil rights. A petition was drawn up to send to other Chinese communities east of the Mississippi River.⁴²

In this event, prominent merchants and scholars of the elite class of the Chinese community provided both strong support and leadership.⁴³ The elite class of gentry and merchants were exempt from restrictive laws, since the 1882 exclusion legislation allowed for "teachers, students, merchants, or travelers for pleasure or curiosity" to come to the United States. However, these exempted classes, as named in the law, did not escape from anti-Chinese harassment. Efforts were still made to block them from coming to the United States. Members of the exempted classes had to be approved by the Chinese government in certificate form, and by an American consul. In 1899, when Yee Ah Lum and thirty other merchants applied for permission to enter the United States, they were denied entrance on the grounds that their certificates in English lacked some of the information required. Efforts were also made to bar members of the exempted group from returning to the United States, unless they presented legal documents proving that

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ The New York Tribune reported that the most powerful and wealthy Chinese merchants in New York were leaders in the protect movement. See McKee, Chinese Exclusion (1977), 37

they had a wife, child or parents in the country.

The constant and arbitrary disregard of the rights of members of elite classes spurred them to advocate racial equality, and they took on their traditional responsibility of leading the struggle. They frequently petitioned American authorities for equitable treatment on behalf of the Chinese in the United States. They wrote letters to Congressmen, a quintessential American practice, denouncing the violence directed at Chinese. They demanded government compensation for the Chinese victims who lost their property in riots and for the relatives of those who were killed by anti-Chinese mobs, arguing that their demand was not simply a matter of asking for payment for lost property and lives. Rather, it was to force the government to protect the civil rights of Chinese immigrants.⁴⁴

In addition, political organizations were formed to oppose Chinese exclusion laws. After its founding in New York, the Chinese Civil Rights League organized a mass meeting at Cooper Union asking public support of justice for the Chinese.⁴⁵ The General Society of Chinese Residing in the United States For the

⁴⁴ As a result of the effort, American government conveyed its regret over the consequences of the anti-Chinese riots, but refused to take responsibilities for the compensation payment. See Shih-shan Henry Tsai, China and the Overseas Chinese in U.S. 1868-1911 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1983), 61

⁴⁵ S.W. Kung, Chinese in American Life (Seattle, University of Washington, 1962), 84

Opposition of the Exclusion Treaty was also formed as a united front of Chinese immigrants. It drew support from Chinese mercantile associations, Chinese Christian societies, as well as political organizations such as the Baohuanghui and the Zhigong Party (Chee Kung Tong) across the United States.⁴⁶ Reflecting a new national spirit that transcended the usual class and local barriers, members of this organization participated in support of the 1905 boycott movement in China which was launched directly to oppose the unequal treatment of Chinese immigrants in the United States.

ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF THE 1905 BOYCOTT

The 1905 boycott movement was initiated by Chinese merchants in Shanghai to protest against the restrictive American policies toward Chinese immigrants. It soon became a national movement in China as teachers, students, doctors, workers, and housewives in major cities participated. In June, a month after it began, 350 Chinese teachers and students at the Anglo-Chinese College in Fuzhou wrote to President Roosevelt to petition against American

⁴⁶ The Baohuanghui was a political party established in the United States to continue agitation for reforms after the failure of the One Hundred Day Reform in China. The Zhigong Party (Chee Kung Tong) affiliated with Sun Yat-sen and his Party, Tongmenghui advocating revolution in China.

mistreatment of overseas Chinese in America.⁴⁷

At the height of the boycott, medical doctors in Beijing, Shanghai, and other cities across China refused to prescribe American medicines. Cigarette smokers rejected American brand cigarettes. Housewives boycotted American-imported flour. In Guangdong, boatmen resolved not to ferry American goods across the Pearl River. Bankers agreed not to do business with the International Banking Corporation of America. The Chinese press rejected any advertisements placed by Americans.

The boycott sent a strong message to the United States of Chinese opposition to racial inequality. "The whole nation of China," remarked Kang Youwei, a prominent Chinese scholar, had become "indignant" over the unfairness of the exclusion policy against the Chinese as a national group. The goal of the boycott, he said to President Theodore Roosevelt, was to prevent the exclusion of any Chinese from the United States.⁴⁸ The boycott, as Jonathan D. Spence describes, was the first national protest movement against American anti-Chinese legislation by means of

⁴⁷ Delber L. Mckee, Chinese Exclusion versus the Open Door Policy 1900-1906: Clashes over China Policy in the Roosevelt Era (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977), 114

⁴⁸ Kang's conversation with the President in June, 1905. New York Tribute, June 28, 1905 p.3, June 29, 1905, 8; Delber L. Mckee, Chinese Exclusion versus the Open Door Policy 1900-1906: Clashes over China Policy in the Roosevelt Era (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977), 131

concerted economic sanction.⁴⁹

More significantly, the 1905 boycott movement stimulated a new kind of popular nationalism that strengthened linkages between the Chinese at home and abroad. New York's Chinese community strongly supported the boycott, saying that their "brothers in China only acted to echo" their wishes. Boycott advocates launched fund-raising campaigns to assist their fellow Chinese in China and Chinese New Yorkers donated to the campaigns from their savings. By the end of 1905, more than \$15,000 in cash had been collected in New York and in other places in the United States.⁵⁰ Besides fund-raising, political organizations were formed to support the boycott. The New York Chinese Civil Rights League and the General Society of Chinese Residing in the United States For the Opposition of the Exclusion Treaty were among the most active organizations. They organized mass rallies such the one at Cooper Union in July,

⁴⁹ Jonathan D. Spence, The Search For Modern China (New York and London, W.W. Norton and Company, 1990), 238

⁵⁰ New York's Chinese also participated in fund-raising campaigns across the United States, particularly in the campaigns organized by the Resist Treaty Committee of San Francisco. By the end of 1905, the Resist Treaty Committee had raised more than fifteen thousand dollars in cash across the country and secured many new pledges for 1906. Unfortunately the funds were burned by the devastating fire that resulted from the earthquake in San Francisco on 18 April, 1906. The Chung Sai Yat Po (China Daily), April 6, 1906; Tsai, China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States, 1868-1911 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1983), 114

1905, particularly for the purpose of supporting the boycott.⁵¹

The boycott affected American business with China. The Standard Oil Company in Guangdong reported that its sales steadily decreased. The Del Monte Milling Company suffered great losses as Chinese merchants cancelled their purchase orders.⁵² Reverend J.M.W. Farnham, a missionary of the American Presbyterian Church in Shanghai, wrote to President Roosevelt in late 1905 that "This boycott...will drive out every American" from China.⁵³

President Theodore Roosevelt became alarmed. In order to protect the American business interests in China, he urged a cautious American immigrant policy towards Chinese. In his 1905 annual message to Congress, the President proposed a revision of laws and treaties as the only way to solve the boycott conflict. "As a people, we have talked much of the open door in China, and we expect,...justice being shown to us by the Chinese,"⁵⁴ indicating that the United States should also show respect to China. In order to reduce the tension, the President issued an Executive Order, calling for the courteous behavior of Americans toward Chinese

⁵¹ S.W. Kung, Chinese in American Life (Seattle, University of Washington, 1962), 84

⁵² Delber L. McKee, Chinese Exclusion versus the Open Door Policy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977), 134

⁵³ Ibid. 114

⁵⁴ McKee, Chinese Exclusion versus the Open Door Policy 1900-1906: Clashes over China Policy in the Roosevelt Era, (Wayne State University Press, 1977), 141

students, merchants, and others,⁵⁵ a totally inadequate solution to racial exclusion. President Roosevelt's concern proved too weak to change Congressional policy. The struggle for racial equality continued and it required a new path to be achieved.

ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF A STRONG CHINA

The 1905 boycott sent a strong message to the American government of the determination of the Chinese for racial equality. It also demonstrated the close relationship between Chinese on both sides of the Pacific. Chinese immigrants differed from other immigrants in relating to their home country. Because of the Chinese Exclusion Law, they developed a dual allegiance often more complicated than that of other ethnic groups. Convinced that their unequal treatment in the United States was a reflection of the ineptness of China and that a strong China could help them improve their status in the United States, they supported efforts to modernize China.

Endorsement of their homeland's Self-Strengthening Movements was an example of such support. Chinese immigrants made important contributions of money and technology. Among others, Huang

⁵⁵ Delbber, L. McKee, Chinese Exclusion versus the Open Door Policy 1900-1906: Clashes over China Policy in the Roosevelt Era, (Wayne State University Press, 1977), 121

Bingchang from San Francisco went back to China in 1890 and started the first electricity generating station in Guangzhou. In 1905, Chin Gee Hee from Seattle started a campaign to raise capital from Chinese immigrants in the United States and Canada to finance the construction of the Sunning Railroad, the first railroad that ran from Taishan District to Xinhui District in Guangdong province.⁵⁶ In 1911, Fong Joe Guey went to China to start the Guangdong Aviation Company. A resident of Oakland, California, he was considered the first Chinese aviator in the world. Others included Tom Gunn, the first Chinese American licensed pilot, who also went back to his ancestral land in 1912. J.K. Choy left Honolulu for China and later became head of the Chinese Merchants Navigation Company.⁵⁷ In 1919, Chen Heqin from New York went to China to "serve his Fatherland" with his science degree from Columbia University.⁵⁸

In addition to their support for China's technological advancement, Chinese immigrants also advocated political reforms, even revolution. In the years of supporting the Self-Strengthening Movements, New York's Chinese urged a constitutional monarchy and an end to the absolute imperial rule. After the failure of the One

⁵⁶ This was the first railroad entirely financed by Chinese Americans. Him Mark Lai, The Chinese of America 1780-1980: An Illustrated History and Catalog of the Exhibition (1980), 65

⁵⁷ Him Mark Lai, The Chinese of America 1780-1980: An Illustrated History and Catalog of the Exhibition (1980), 67

⁵⁸ The Chinese Reform News, June 4, 1919

Hundred Days Reform, New York's Chinese allied with the Baohuanghui, a political party established in the United States to continue agitation for reforms. Important community associations, such as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, announced their affiliation to the party and many individuals became members.⁵⁹ Merchants provided financial support for the party's newspaper, The Chinese Reform News, to spread reform ideas. On March 10, 1904, its inaugural issue in Chinese appeared in New York, and it became the first Chinese newspaper published in the United States. Published every Wednesday and Saturday, it reported the development of Chinese national industries and enterprises. The newspaper also kept close watch on Japanese expansion in Asia. News on local political reforms, as well as rebellions against the Qing court, appealed to readers in the United States.

New York's Chinese were enthusiastic supporters of rebellions against the Qing court, which held responsibility for their unequal treatment in the United States. By 1907, they had joined with Chinese across America to raised \$58,813 for a military school in New York, the Ganchen Xuexiao (The Vanguarders), to train young men to fight in China.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ L. Eve Ma, Revolutionaries, Monarchists & Chinatowns Chinese Politics in the Americas & the 1911 Revolution (Honolulu, Hawaii UP. 1990), Chapter 6

⁶⁰ Xianzi Wu, Zhong guo min zhu xian zhen dang dang shi (San Francisco, 1952), 85-91, Tsai, China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States (1983), 92

New York's Chinese strongly supported the 1911 Revolution to overthrow the Qing court and establish a Republic of China. They had switched their political affiliation from the Baohuanghui to Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshang) and his party, the Tongmenghui (Chinese United League), as it had a clear agenda to "Expel the Manchus, Restore Chinese rules, and Establish a republic."⁶¹ When Sun came to New York to raise funds for his party, he received the endorsement of New York's Chinese. Duanfang, a high Qing court official, reported that wherever Sun Wen (Sun Zhongshan) went during his trips, thousands of Chinese would go to hear him speak. "Nobody could change the trend," as Sun and his cause "[were] in accordance with the will of the people."⁶² During his second trip to New York, Sun collected the 20,000 needed for a military

⁶¹ Many New York Chinese switched their political affiliation from the Baohuanghui to Tongmenghui because the Baohuanghui continued to support the Manchu's legacy to govern. In an interview with the New York Times in 1904, Liang Qichao, a former member of the party, claimed that he felt little attachment to Emperor Guangxu anymore. Lian also believed that the Baohuanghui was no longer interested in reform as a national politics. It became more conservative. See L. Eve Armentrout Ma's book, Revolutionaries, Monarchists & Chinatowns-Chinese, for details. The Tongmenghui took roots in the United States in 1906 with the support of anti-Qing secret societies, such as the Hungmenjiao (The religious League of Hungmen), the Zhigong Party (Chee Kung Tong), and the Xingzhonghui (The Revive China Society) which was established in Honolulu with an initial membership of 112 in 1894.

⁶² Materials on Xinhai Revolution, Vol. IV, 41-44; Shen Hu, Ya Pian Zhan Zheng Dao Wu Si Yun Dong (From the Opium War to the May 4 Movement) (Beijing: People's Publisher, 1980), 714

uprising to overthrow imperial rule.⁶³

New York's Chinese felt rewarded when a republic was declared in China in 1911. They sent congratulatory telegrams to the new government. Festive rallies were organized. On December 30, 2,000 Chinese New Yorkers participated in a mass parade organized by the Young China Association in New York to celebrate the victory of the republican revolution.⁶⁴ Chinatown residents lined along Mott, Pell and Doyer Streets hailing the establishment of the New Republic. Many of New York's Chinese rushed out to buy the new Chinese national flags. The Young China reported that hundreds of new national flags were sold in one day.⁶⁵ Celebrations of the new Republic lasted for several days. During this time, barbershops stayed open day and night to cut men's queues, a sign of Chinese national humiliation.⁶⁶ Proud and elated, and with their queues gone, New York's Chinese expected support for the improvement of their status in the United States.

However, the reversion of Yuan Shikai to imperial rule soon after the Revolution disappointed these expectations. In the years that followed the Revolution, China suffered from warlords' wars as

⁶³ Ma, Revolutionaries, Monarchies and Chinatown -Chinese politics in the Americas and the 1911 Revolution (1990), 131

⁶⁴ The Young China, Dec. 30, 1911

⁶⁵ Ibid, Nov. 30, 1911

⁶⁶ The Young China, Nov. 29, 1911

well as political chaos. Believing that "the only way to save China was to make certain that China adhered to democracy,"⁶⁷ New York's Chinese condemned Yuan and continued to support the Republic as China's legitimate government. A Chinese Reform News article denounced emperors as felons and predicted that anyone who attempted to restore the old feudal system would eventually be doomed.⁶⁸ Dare-to-die corps were organized in several Chinese communities across the United States to commit themselves to the cause against warlords.⁶⁹

ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY

The efforts of New York's Chinese to support a strong China were also demonstrated in their endorsement of Chinese territorial integrity. The establishment of concessions and extraterritoriality by foreign powers in China humiliated the Chinese in the United States. They strongly supported efforts to regain Chinese territories as a means of preserving national dignity and strengthening their demands for racial equality in the United States. Their petition to President Woodrow Wilson for Chinese territorial integrity during the Paris Peace Conference once again demonstrated the dual sense of nationalism felt by the

⁶⁷ Young China, December 28, 1911

⁶⁸ Chinese Reform News, Aug. 29, 1917

⁶⁹ The Young China, Dec. 8, 1911

Chinese in America.

Chinese New Yorkers resented the Treaty of Versailles for leaving Shandong, a former German concession in China, under Japanese control without considering China's claim of sovereignty after World War I. The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) sent a telegram to President Wilson, urging the President to adhere to the principles of his Fourteen Points for national self-determination, equality, and democracy in dealing with Chinese territories.⁷⁰ It also sent a telegram to Lu Zhengxiang, Wang Zhengting, and Gu Weijung, Chinese delegates to the Conference, to encourage them to seek justice for China.⁷¹ In May, 1919, New York's Chinese invited Kong Xiangke and Xu Zonghan, two delegates from Shandong province to the Conference, to New York after they refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles.⁷²

New York's Chinese students also participated in activities to demand justice for China during the Versailles Convention. Their organization, The New York Chinese Students Patriotic Association released four pamphlets relating to the Shandong issue in a short period of time between February and July, 1919, condemning the

⁷⁰ In the telegram, the CCBA also asked the President to bring the Twenty-one Requests to the international negotiation table, and demanded the repeal of the unequal treaty. Chinese Reform News, Feb. 8, 1919

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Chinese Reform News, May 21, 1919, ; July 23, 1919

unequal treaty and asking the Chinese to continue their struggle for the dignity of their mother country.⁷³ At the same time, it lobbied the United States Senate, a common American political practice, to pressure the American government to reconsider its policy on the Chinese territorial issue.⁷⁴

The Chinese American Citizen Alliance in New York also expressed its opposition to the Treaty of Versailles.⁷⁵ Clearly identifying themselves as Chinese Americans, members of this organization sent a telegram to Congress:

We, the Chinese Americans, joined the American army and navy to fight for the Chinese Republic. We are determined to fight until our last blood to regain Shandong with its rich natural resources from Japanese.⁷⁶

⁷³ The four pamphlets were Chinese vs. Japanese, China's Claims at the Peace Table, The Kiao Chau Settlement, and Why China Refused to sign the Peace Treaty. Chinese Reform News, July 23, 1919

⁷⁴ Chinese Reform News, July 23, 1919

⁷⁵ The Chinese American Citizen Alliance in New York was founded in 1916. Located at 6 Mott Street, this organization played an important role in assisting American-born Chinese to feel more a part of America.

⁷⁶ Chinese Reform News, June 4, 1919

A number of New York's American-born Chinese joined the American military forces during the Great War. According to the Chinese Reform News, April 6, 1919, ten out of one thousand soldiers recruited from New York were Chinese Americans. Tan Xing, Tan Quan, and Li Benzi were among those who were the first to be recruited into the American army and fought in the war. When the war was over, New York's Chinese community held parades and meetings to welcome those who came back from the war and honored them as Chinese American soldiers. The New York Chinese

The strong opposition of New York's Chinese played an important role in bringing the Shandong issue to the Washington Conference for reconsideration in 1921. To ensure that justice would be done for China, the New York Chinese Student Patriotic Association sent representatives to the Conference, where a resolution to deny the right of Japan to acquire Shandong was upheld.⁷⁷

The victory at the Washington Conference was a consequence of the New York Chinese's continuous support for a strong China. Their demand for China's sovereignty and their support for a modern China also served the desire of Chinese immigrants to be treated equally. At both the Versailles Convention and the Washington Conference, New York's Chinese sent a strong message to the international community about their requirement for racial equality while supporting China's demand for territorial integrity. In an April telegram to the Versailles Convention, they urged the repeal of all laws and regulations discriminating against overseas

contributions to the war were rewarded. After the war, a few Chinese American soldiers were promoted. Huie Dongyong, Huie Kin's son was one of those who received promotion to a higher military position after the war. Chinese Reform News, May 7, 1919

⁷⁷ The Chinese government accepted the Association's application for sending its representatives to be part of the government delegation to the Conference. Five students presented themselves as delegates. Weili Ye, "Crossing the cultures: The experience of Chinese in the U.S.A., 1900-1925," Ph.D dissertation, Yale University, 1989, 67

Chinese.⁷⁸ Thus their demand for justice for China supported their request for racial equality in the United States.

Conclusion

Chinese immigrants settled in New York one and a half centuries ago. They gradually started their businesses, and worked hard to achieve their goal of living a better life. The Chinese Exclusion Laws jeopardized their American dreams. Throughout the years of exclusion, they opposed racial discrimination through legal processes, petitions to the government, and mass demonstrations. Their resistance efforts received support from their compatriots in China. In their efforts to regain their constitutional right to live and work in the United States, New York's Chinese also endorsed reforms and revolution for a strong China as a means of strengthening their demands for racial equality in the United States. These dual obligations demonstrated not only the close tie between New York's Chinese and their motherland but also their desire to live in the country where they had lived and worked.

Efforts of Chinese immigrants for justice and equality, as we will see, continued, even though they took a different course when the Great Depression hit the United States. In order to survive the Depression, I show the degree to which they participated in

⁷⁸ Chinese Reform News, April 6, 1919

activities to redefine themselves and their relationship to American society.

Chapter II

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DEPRESSION ON ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

The Great Depression plagued the United States in one form or another for more than a decade from 1929 onwards. It was a traumatic experience for Americans who faced unemployment, the loss of land and business, and, in some cases, homelessness and starvation. This chapter describes the Great Depression and its impact on the New York Chinese community. It will focus on New York's Chinese labor organizations and small business associations and their activities to survive the Depression. The interpretations of the Chinese response to the Depression need reassessment. In the materials I present below, my argument differs from accepted interpretations of culture, class, and desire for their acceptance by American society.

The Economic Impact of the Depression

Historians have argued for more than a half century about the causes of the Depression. However, most of them agree that the lack of diversification of the American economy, the maldistribution of purchasing power, the failure of the credit

structure, and the crash of the stock market were major problems that eventually contributed to the economic crisis. Observers also agree that it is not remarkable that the crisis occurred. Periodic recessions are normal features of capitalist economics. The significance of the crisis lies in its severity and length.⁷⁹

During the Depression, economic grievances and suffering extended into every area of society. During the first three years⁸⁰ of the Depression, more than 5,000 banks failed. Unemployment climbed to twelve million in 1932. In an industrial city like Cleveland, half of the working people were out of a job by that year. In New York, about one fourth of its workers were unemployed by 1933. "Hoovervilles" were clusters of common shacks for the homeless. Bread lines stretched for blocks outside Red Cross and Salvation Army kitchens. One historian reported that on a single day during the early Depression, 85,000 New Yorkers waited for free

⁷⁹ There is voluminous literature on the Great Depression.

John K. Galbraith, in The Great Crash, 1929 (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1955) and Lester Chandler, in America's Greatest Depression: 1929-1941 (New York: Harper and Row, 1970) discuss the events that caused the Depression. Charles Kindleberger, The World in Depression (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, 1986) discusses the Depression from the global perspective. Studs Terkel's The Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970) and Robert McElvaine's The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941 (New York: Times Books, 1984) discusses the culture and values in the Depression Era. For a convenient reproduction of approximately 150 articles on all aspects of this topic, see The Great Depression and the New Deal (Garland Publishing, 1990), ed. Melvyn Dubofsky and Stephen Burnwood.

meals at eighty-one locations in front of churches and other charitable institutions.⁸¹ Across the country, nearly two million people took to the roads, riding freight trains from city to city, in search of jobs.

The Depression hit the American economy severely. As a part of the American economic structure, Chinese communities in the United States suffered great losses during the Depression. There were approximately 74,954 Chinese living in the United States in 1930.⁸² By 1931, twenty-five percent of the Chinese in the United States were jobless. Over a thousand Chinese merchants lost their savings, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, in bank failures. Many small proprietors went bankrupt.⁸³ In New York City, more than a hundred and fifty out of three hundred Chinese restaurants went out of business in the year 1930. As a consequence, New York's Chinese groceries and stores closed. Other enterprises were also severely affected.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Frederick M. Binder and David M. Reimers, All the Nations Under Heaven (New York, CUP, 1995), 178

⁸² Among those Chinese living in the United States were 30,868 native-born Chinese Americans. Source: U. S. Census; Betty L. Sung, Mountain of Gold The story of the Chinese in America (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969), 269

⁸³ New York Times April 27, 1931; Hsuan Julia Chen, "The Chinese Community in New York, A Study in Their Cultural Adjustment 1920-1940" (Ph.D diss., Washington American University, 1941), 60

⁸⁴ The Chinese Journal Dec. 12, 1930, 7; Hsuan Julia Chen, "The Chinese Coming in New York," 60; Thomas Chow, "Chinese

Restaurant and laundry workers found themselves in the swollen ranks of the unemployed. Approximately 3,000 Chinese in New York City had lost their jobs by 1932.⁸⁵

Out of the total New York population of 6,939,446, 1930 census figures recorded the New York Chinese population as 8,414.⁸⁶ The discriminatory and exclusionist legislation had a permanent adverse effect upon the Chinese in the United States. As they were barred from entering the United States and denied the right of naturalization, the Chinese remained a very small population.

Great differences exist between the number of the Chinese listed in the U. S. census and the estimates given by observers and the Chinese themselves. Both Leong Gor Yun, a Chinese American journalist and Thomas Chow, a Chinese American in the Federal Writers' Project estimated that 30,000 Chinese were living in New

Restaurants Association of Greater New York," March 22, 1937, 1, Works Progress Administration (WPA): Federal Writers' Project, NYC Unit, Racial Groups in NY I, Roll 1 of 5, MN# 21065, Roll# 66 1936-40, Record Sub-Series: Chinese in NY, Description: Organizations, Folder #48 (New York: New York Municipal Archives, 1936-1940), Microfilm

The Federal Writers' Program under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was part of the New Deal government subsidized relief work project during the Depression. One unexpected consequence of the project is documentation of the life of the New York Chinese community and its people in the 1930's. Chinese Americans participated in the writers' project.

⁸⁵ Shih-shan Henry Tsai, The Chinese Experiences in America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 108

⁸⁶ Ira Rosenwaik, Population History of New York City (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 141

York in 1930.⁸⁷ Bendiner, another Chinese American in the Federal Writers' Project reported that 18,000 were living in New York.⁸⁸ Part of the reason for the disparity was due to the nature of New York as a port of entry and departure which made it difficult to collect accurate statistics. In addition, because of Chinese exclusion laws, many Chinese hid from census takers to avoid deportation.

⁸⁷ Leong Gor Yun, Chinatown Inside Out (New York: Barrow Mussey, 1936), 133; Thomas Chow, "Chinese population in New York," Jan. 11, 1937, 2, WPA Federal Writers' Project, NYC Unit, Racial Groups in NY I, Roll 1 of 5, MN# 21065, Roll# 66 1936-40 Record Sub-Series: Chinese in NY, Folder #50 (New York City: New York Municipal Archives), Microfilm

⁸⁸ Bendiner, "Chinese, Japanese," in "Chinese in New York, Present Distribution in New York." Report of Federal Writer's Project, WPA, Box 1, Folder #50, 1936- 1940 (New York City: New York Municipal Archives), Microfilm. The author's full name was not given.

New York's Chinese Population Estimates and
total population in New York City

	Census Data	Geong Gor Yun	Bendiner	NYC's total
1900	6,321	N.A.	N.A.	3,437,202
1910	4,614	N.A.	N.A.	4,716,883
1920	5,042	N.A.	N.A.	5,620,048
1930	8,414	30,000	18,000	6,939,446
1940	12,753*			7,454,995*

* Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census Data

Ira Rosenwaike, Population History of New York City (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 141.

N.A.= Not Available

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census Data, New York's Chinese population grew from 1920 to 1940, due partly to an increase in American native-born Chinese. There were only 710 native-born Chinese in New York in 1910. By 1920, 1,084 native-born Chinese New Yorkers were recorded. There was a big jump in the New York Chinese population in 1930 when 1,926 native-born New York Chinese were recorded. By 1940, 4,745 native-born Chinese New Yorkers were recorded.⁸⁹ The Depression accounted for the increase in New York's Chinese population, as many Chinese moved to the East. A major reason for the move arose from a "dream" of potential opportunities.

The Depression and Traditional Chinese Aid Associations

⁸⁹ Ira Rosenwaike, Population History of New York City (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 141

During the Depression, New York's traditional Chinese community organizations assumed their charitable responsibilities. The most important, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) quickly established relief agencies to distribute food and clothing to the needy and the desperate. The CCBA was originally formed in 1874 to settle disputes and conflicts over business and personal issues in the New York Chinese community. Membership of this association extended to different social stratifications. Prominent merchants and elite scholars constituted the leadership of the association. Representatives of various organizations, such as business and district associations, comprised a large part of the CCBA. The CCBA had judiciary power over most aspects of the lives of New York Chinese. Both the Chinese and American society considered the CCBA the representative body for all Chinese in New York. During the Depression, the CCBA used its resources of collected revenues from business firms and its membership fees to provide emergency aid to its people.

Other Chinese community organizations, such as the Chinese Merchants Association in New York City and various district associations also contributed to the relief efforts. The Chinese Merchants Association in New York City was a business association. In 1931, this organization filed a petition in the New York Supreme Court, asking permission to mortgage its clubhouse property at 41 Mott Street for 45,000 dollars to be spent for the relief of the

needy.⁹⁰

District associations, known as Hui Guan, also set up emergent programs to assist the community. Many Chinese immigrants to New York originally came from various geographic districts in Guangdong and Fujian provinces in China. Not long after they settled in New York in the early 1890's, those from the same geographic district established associations to seek mutual assistance and support. The Ning Yang Hui Guan (Ning Yong Association), for example, was organized by immigrants from Taishan (Toishan) in New York in 1890.⁹¹

During the Depression, each district association established a special fund for those who were in financial difficulty. Members of the district associations contributed to the fund whenever they could afford it. In addition, district associations provided temporary room and board for those who had difficulties paying their rent.⁹²

⁹⁰ New York Times, August 7, 1931; Hsuan Julia Chen, "The Chinese Community in New York, 1920-1940," (Ph.D Diss. Washington: American University, 1941), 61. According to Chen, their request was granted by Justice Care.

⁹¹ Liu Pei-Chi, Min Guo Hua Qiao Shi [A History of the Chinese in the United States of America] (Taipei: Limin Wenhua Shiye Gonsi, 1976), 204; Renqiu Yu, To Save China, To Save Ourselves (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1992), 16; Also see Chia-ling Kuo, Social and Political Change in New York's Chinatown: The Role of Voluntary Associations (New York: Praeger Publisher, 1977)

⁹² Hsuan Julia Chen, "The Chinese Community in New York, 1920-1940," (Ph.D Diss. Washington: American University, 1941),

Mutual assistance among individual Chinese immigrants operated during the Depression too. Workers split full-time jobs with their fellows. Landlords gave tenants a month's concession on rent. Children brought friends home after school to share what food they had.⁹³ Adults adopted orphans in order to save their lives.⁹⁴

However, traditional charitable organizations and mutual aid among individuals could not meet the needs of so many people who had lost their businesses and jobs during the Depression. Because of the unpredictable economic crisis and prolonged unemployment, local Chinese newspapers reported that tenants evicted for nonpayment of rent and people starving to death were not rare phenomena in New York's Chinese community during the Depression. The suicide rate increased as the long-time unemployed felt hopeless.⁹⁵ Given the Chinese work ethic, unemployed Chinese

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⁹³ "Interview with Virginia M. Kee" by Sharene Thomas, Tenement Times, Vol.1, No.2, Spring, 1990. Ms.Kee was the co-founder and president of the Chinese American Planning Council. She also sat on the board of the United Neighborhood Houses and on the Mayor's Advisory Board For Early Childhood Education in 1990. Virginia Kee recalled that during the Depression, kids sometimes brought their schoolmates home to share snacks in PS 1, which integrated all Chinese elementary school kids of PS 23 in the early 1930's.

⁹⁴ A 1933 Chinese Nationalist Daily (Ming Qi Ri Bao) article reported that Mr. and Mrs. She decided to adopt an orphan boy in order to save his life. Chinese Nationalist Daily July 7, 1933

⁹⁵ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Jan. 29, 1933, 3

preferred death to the shame of being out of work.

Labor Unions and Small Business Alliances

As the Depression continued, and the hardships became more unpredictable, neither the political authorities nor the traditional charitable organizations in the Chinese community could provide sufficient aid to the devastated people in their community. Overwhelmed, New York's Chinese turned to other alternatives for survival. In the midst of the Depression, the emergence of different kinds of labor organizations and small business associations such as the Chinese Unemployed Council, the Chinese Maritime Union, the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance, and the Chinese American Restaurant Association of Greater New York, illustrated the transformations taking place within the Chinese community in the 1930's.

Instead of looking for assistance from traditional organizations, Chinese laborers and small businessmen moved towards self-reliance and organization to survive the economic crisis. The formation of labor organizations and small business alliances during the Depression challenged the authority of the CCBA and fundamentally shook the traditional social structure of the New York Chinese community. As the newly organized alliances turned away from depending on the network of traditional institutions within the New York Chinese community, the traditional

organizations lost their power and influence.

Chinese workers undertook new strategies because of the Depression. Influenced by the American labor movement, they began to seek support from American labor unions to protect their interests. Their efforts to take part in the 1933 city-wide pro-NIRA parades and in the 1937 National Maritime Union strike are good examples of the movement towards integrating Chinese immigrants into society through active engagement in American mainstream activities.

In their struggle for survival during the Depression, New York's Chinese small businessmen sought American government assistance and legal protection. Their demand for municipal government relief, like their legal battles against the New York City Laundry Ordinance and the license codes in the 1930's, significantly challenged the legitimacy of existing American discrimination against the Chinese.

The Depression of the 1930's was harsh to the Chinese in New York. The hard times fostered in them a desire for equal rights and legal protection as minority citizens. In their effort to survive the economic crisis, New York's Chinese became active in organizing themselves. Driven by a legacy of racist exclusion, they developed a new set of attitudes reflecting their desire for change.

The Chinese Exclusion Law of 1882 made it almost impossible for the Chinese to find jobs in the industrial sectors of the larger society, because it became extremely difficult for them to document legal status necessary for such work. The Chinese exclusion not only barred the Chinese from freely entering the United States, but also denied the right of naturalization to those already in the United States.⁹⁶

Strong anti-foreign sentiment that led to the passage of a series of New York State laws restricting alien employment opportunities also resulted in the reduction of the number of Chinese workers in manufacturing.⁹⁷ For example, the New York State legislature passed a law in 1884 that excluded all aliens (not just those who had not yet declared their intention to become citizens) from jobs in state and local public works.⁹⁸ The 1885 New York Tribune report counted 300 cigar makers in New York's Chinatown.

⁹⁶ See Chapter I for information on how the Chinese Exclusion Laws affected the lives and legal status of the Chinese in the United States.

⁹⁷ John Higham, Strangers in the Land, Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New York, 1981): 72, 161, 162, 260; Xinyang Wang, "Economic Opportunity, Artisan Leadership, and Immigrant Workers' Labor Militancy: Italian and Chinese immigrant Workers In New York City, 1890-1970," Labor History 37, no.4 (Fall 1996): 496

⁹⁸ Laws of the State of New York, 1894, ch 622, p. 1569; Labor Laws of the United States (Second Special Report of the Commissioners of Labor, Washington, 1896), 993; John Higham, Strangers in the Land, Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New York, 1981), 72

Three decades later, Chinese cigar makers had almost disappeared from the city.⁹⁹

The rejection of Chinese workers in manufacturing by the American labor unions was also responsible for the decline in status of Chinese industrial workers. The Knights of Labor opposed the use of the Chinese, accusing them of lowering the wages of white workers by working as cheap laborers. The Workingmen's Party, led by the Irish seaman Dennis Kearney, also opposed the use of the Chinese.¹⁰⁰ As a result of restrictive laws and the American workers' rejection of the Chinese participation in manufacturing, a major portion of New York's Chinese working population could be found in the service industry. By 1930, 83% of New York's Chinese working population was involved in small businesses, particularly restaurants and laundries.¹⁰¹ According to one account, more than four thousand New York Chinese either worked in or owned

⁹⁹ The New York Tribune, June 21, 1985; Xinyang Wang, "Economic Opportunity, Artisan Leadership, and Immigrant Workers' Labor Militancy: Italian and Chinese immigrant Workers In New York City, 1890-1970," Labor History 37, no.4 (Fall 1996): 481

¹⁰⁰ Chia-Ling Kuo, Social and Political Change in New York's Chinatown, The Role of Voluntary Association (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), 2

¹⁰¹ The Fifteenth Census, 1930, Population, Vol. V. General Report on Occupations, 95-97; Xinyang Wang, "Economic Opportunity, Artisan Leadership, and Immigrant Workers' Labor Militancy: Italian and Chinese immigrant Workers In New York City, 1890-1970," Labor History 37, no.4 (Fall 1996): 485

restaurants.¹⁰² One-third of the population of New York's Chinese community was connected to the laundry business as either workers, partners, or individual owners.¹⁰³ In small businesses the owners worked along side their employees. The Depression made the situation for both workers and owners more desperate as New York's Chinese laundry and restaurant population became vulnerable to bankruptcy and unemployment.

In order to combat the Depression, different kinds of small business and labor organizations emerged in the New York Chinese community. These organizations may not have conformed to the conventional conceptual definition of labor unions, which are generally thought to demand higher wages, shorter working hours, better working conditions, and increased benefits through collective bargaining and strikes. But the efforts of the Chinese poor, both workers and small businessmen, to organize to protect their economic interests and seek political recognition during the Depression, echoed the producer movement Sean Wilentz describes a century earlier in New York City.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Chen, "The Chinese community in New York, 1920-1940," (1990), 58

¹⁰³ Bendiner, "Chinese, Japanese," in "Chinese in New York, Present Distribution in New York." Report of Federal Writer's Project, WPA, Box 1, Folder #50, (New York City: New York Municipal Archives, 1935-1940)

¹⁰⁴ Sean Wilentz, Chants Democratic New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class: 1788-1850 (New York: Oxford

¹⁰⁴ Sean Wilentz, Chants Democratic New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class: 1788-1850 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984; Also see Roy Rosenzweig, Eight Hours For

The Chinese Unemployed Council-Greater New York

The Chinese Unemployed Council-Greater New York was one of the first Chinese immigrant labor organizations established in New York in the midst of the Depression that aimed to take care of the social welfare of the unemployed. Unlike the restaurant and laundry groups which included both employees and employers, this organization was organized by a group of unemployed workers to survive the economic crisis on their own. The purpose of the formation of this organization was clearly stated in its declaration on January 4, 1933:

... the present economic crisis is getting worse, our hardship of being unemployed is also becoming more difficult to bear, so many around us have no food, clothing or shelter. Can we possibly sit here and do nothing waiting for death to come? No, Therefore the only way out for us is to centralize all the strength of the unemployed to solve the hardships and the sufferings of the unemployed. ... As a result we decide to go ahead with the formation of an unemployed organization....¹⁰⁵

On January 13, 1933, ten days after the declaration, the Chinese Unemployed Council held its first membership meeting. At the meeting, the participants agreed that the Council should become

What We Will: Workers and Leisure In An Industrial city, 1870-1920 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

¹⁰⁵ Chinese Nationalist Daily, January 11, 1933, 7. Peter Kwong, Chinatown, New York Labor and Politics, 1930-1950 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 56

an organization that would "unite with all the forces of the unemployed" in the Chinese community, "regardless of their political leanings, or clan or village distinctions."¹⁰⁶ Breaking away from district organizations and the control of the CCBA, the Council challenged not only the traditional sources of power, but also the structure of the Chinese community.

Since the Chinese Unemployed Council was an independent organization, its leaders perceived the importance of seeking support from labor organizations in the larger society. The notion "to unite with American movements" so as to strengthen "Chinese-American unity" was clearly stated in the declaration of the Council.¹⁰⁷ This suggested that from the beginning, the organization was ready to move towards the integration of its activities with the American labor movement at large. Soon after its establishment, the CUC sent delegates to a national demonstration in Washington, D.C. as part of its commitment to participate in mainstream activities seeking federal and local public assistance.¹⁰⁸

For the first time, the CUC was openly demanding government assistance for Chinese immigrants. Having been excluded for more

¹⁰⁶ Chinese Nationalist Daily, June 17, 1933

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Sucheng Chan, Asian Americans, An Interpretive History (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 116

than fifty years under the shadow of the exclusion laws, Chinese immigrants were haunted by the fear of getting into any trouble. However, the devastating situation during the 1930's Depression pushed Chinese immigrants to look for government assistance of any kind in order to survive. "To request assistance from federal and municipal sources", the CUC announced, was necessary to provide substantial aid to the Chinese immigrants to survive hard times during the Depression.¹⁰⁹

Shih-Shan Henry Tsai suggests that Chinese immigrants were too proud to apply for government assistance during the Depression. The Chinese immigrants, he contends, preferred starvation to the indignity of accepting government aid during hard times. They relied on self-help and community benevolence instead of turning to federal relief agencies for help.¹¹⁰ Rather than following the "Chinese pride" theory, I believe that the fear that haunted the Chinese under the shadow of the exclusion laws hindered them from looking for government help. However, continuous hardship in the Depression turned the wave around.

Persistent racial discrimination had forced Chinese New Yorkers to look for some organizational and mutual assistance among themselves. However, the devastating situation during the

¹⁰⁹ Chinese National Daily, January 17, 1933, 7

¹¹⁰ Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, The Chinese experiences in America (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1986), 109

Depression convinced them to also seek government support. By requesting such assistance, New York's Chinese increasingly demanded their equal right to attain help from the American government. According to the Federal Emergency Relief report, only 1.2% of the New York Chinese sought government relief before 1933. After 1933, when food tickets were distributed by the government relief agency, the Chinese Nationalist Daily reported more Chinese New Yorkers standing in the line.¹¹¹

However, the government did not provide equal subsidies for the Chinese, and gave those who were on relief a food budget that reflected racial bias. The relief budget to the Chinese was 10 to 20 percent lower than that given to "whites" because the relief agencies believed that Asian Americans could subsist on a less expensive diet.¹¹²

For a half century since the 1880's, New York's Chinese had suffered humiliation from existing cultural bias and racial discrimination. They were forced to withdraw into their own community in order to protect themselves from unnecessary risks. The formation of the Chinese Unemployed Council during the Depression was a ground-breaking and bold experiment for the Chinese in New York. Its activities contributed to a growing

¹¹¹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, March 29, 1933

¹¹² Sucheng Chan, Asian Americans: An Interpretive History (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 115

demand that New York's Chinese be accepted by American society.

The emergence of the CUC challenged the authoritarian power of the CCBA. Previously, the CCBA had been the only body to deal with the outside world. The formation of the CUC signalled the beginning of the downfall of traditional social and political structure in the Chinese community, as the Chinese Unemployed Council was organized without considering linkages of family or geographic origin. The desire of the Chinese unemployed workers to integrate their activities into the American labor movement demonstrated both growing self-consciousness and, as has been suggested, an increasing class consciousness.

More important, by joining mainstream activities to seek governmental assistance to survive the Depression, the Chinese unemployed workers' organization not only challenged the values of traditional charity organization, but in fact represented a new ideology. Instead of believing that relief work should be carried on independently and voluntarily by family and district organizations, the new ideology contended that the American government should take responsibility for the unemployed and the poor.

The Depression was harsh. But the hard times also pushed New York Chinese to organize. In combating the hardships, the Chinese Unemployed Council was not the only labor organization to emerge in New York's Chinese community during the Depression. Another

example of such a labor organization was the Chinese Seamen's Union.

The New York Chinese Seamen's Union

The Chinese Seamen's Union, known as the Lein Yi Society, was an important labor organization established during the early 1930's. Because of the mobile nature of their jobs, Chinese seamen were not usually seen as members of New York's Chinese community. However, during hard times when many Chinese seamen lost their jobs on vessels, they stayed ashore and looked for jobs in New York City. Several district associations in the New York Chinese community had seamen members.

Like other Chinese immigrants, Chinese seamen were subject to racial discrimination. They were often accused of being cheap laborers that robbed white seamen of jobs. The intensified job competition during the Depression made the situation worse. Established American labor unions opposed the use of Chinese seamen on American vessels. In January 1933, when a Dollar Shipping Company vessel, the S.S. Lincoln, reached New York harbor, an American labor union, the Seamen's International Union (SIU), protested its use of Chinese seamen. Claiming that "Chinese seamen charged low wages", thus "taking away jobs from Americans", the SIU demanded the immediate discharge of Chinese seamen from U.S.

shipping companies.¹¹³ The SIU also lobbied Congress to pass a bill barring all foreign seamen from working on U.S. ships. Soon its sentiment against Chinese seamen extended to all Chinese immigrants. Cooperating with the Immigration Office in raids to find illegal entrants in the Chinese immigrant community, the SIU facilitated the arrest of the Chinese. More than two hundred Chinese immigrants were ultimately deported after months of confinement on Ellis Island.¹¹⁴

Facing the attack, Chinese seamen decided to organize to combat racial barriers and protect their interests. In 1936, they established a Chinese seamen's union, the Lien Yi Society (LYS) in New York. Soon after its establishment, the LYS participated in a strike organized by the National Maritime Union (NMU).

The National Maritime Union was an important American maritime union. Claiming its independence from the SIU in 1935, it adhered to the principle of "no discrimination against any union members because of his race, color political affiliation, creed, religion or national origin."¹¹⁵ In 1936, the National Maritime Union (NMU)

¹¹³ Chinese Vanguard, Feb. 1, 1933; Kwong, Chinatown, New York (1979), 119

¹¹⁴ Kwong, Chinatown, New York (1979), 119

¹¹⁵ Hugh Mulzac, A Star to Steer By (New York, International Publishers, 1963), 116. Mulzac was a cook-steward on the Virmar, a vessel operated by the Calmar SS Company during the strike. He recalled the principle as he told his experiences to Louis Burnham and Norval Welch which became the book.

called for a strike. In order to make the strike successful, the NMU sought support from the Chinese seamen's union. The Lien Yi Society decided to participate, and asked the NMU to support its demand for an equal wage scale with other seamen hired by the Dollar Shipping Company and the legal right of Chinese seamen to shore leave.¹¹⁶

Representatives from both unions met in New York to work out an agreement. At the negotiation table, the NMU representatives of the Dollar Shipping Company urged the LYS to join their strike, but the LYS took a cautious attitude towards the issue. The shipping companies still held the \$500 bonds of a number of Chinese seamen, therefore if the strike failed, the jobs of these Chinese seamen would be in jeopardy. The negotiation lasted for days until the two unions finally reached an agreement.

With a promise that the NMU would support its demands for the equal treatment of the Chinese seamen, the LYS mobilized three thousand Chinese seamen to join in the NMU's strike. The strike was successful as the ship company agreed to provide better food and adequate food supplies on vessels.¹¹⁷

The cooperation between the American and Chinese seamen's unions demonstrated a new trend in the American labor movement in

¹¹⁶ Chinese National Daily, Nov. 17, 1936, 3; Kwong, Chinatown, New York (1979), 121

¹¹⁷ Mulzac, A Star to Steer By (1963), 109

the 1930's. During this decade, the American working class began to perceive the importance of a multiracial class consciousness to unify workers without consideration of race or national origin.

The shift of the American labor union from a conservative organization to a more open one provided an opportunity for the Chinese workers to reach out. Chinese laborers were accepted into the mainstream of the American labor movement for the first time in the past fifty years.

Although the favorable attitudes of American unions towards the Chinese provided inspiration, Chinese workers themselves played a key role in strengthening their labor movement in the 1930's. The active participation of many Chinese seamen in the National Maritime Union during the 1936 strike was a breakthrough for Chinese workers in forming alliances with the American working class. The LYS was considered one of the first Chinese labor unions to integrate with the mainstream of the American labor movement.¹¹⁸

On June 16, 1937, the Lien Yi Society, as an independent union, successfully organized a sit-down strike in New York to protest the Dollar Shipping Company's discriminatory treatment of Chinese seamen, unfair layoffs in particular. The problem began in 1936 when Congress authorized federal subsidies to shipping companies carrying the U. S. mail. Congress insisted that for the

¹¹⁸ Kwong, Chinatown, New York (1979), 116

sake of the security of the United States in wartime, those shipping companies that received government subsidies could hire no foreign seamen. This wartime legislation jeopardized the jobs of Chinese seamen hired by those shipping companies. Consequently, Chinese seamen were promptly laid off without any advance notice or warning.

Frustrated, the LYS called a sit-down strike to oppose the immediate layoffs. Chinese seamen working on the American vessels, S.S. President Taft and S.S. Polk responded favorably. On June 26, 1937, they went on strike, demanding that the shipping companies offer six months's compensatory pay for the layoffs, and that all seamen who had been laid off be guaranteed return passage to New York.

This protest won the backing of the National Maritime Union (NUM), which declared full support for the Chinese seamen's demands. Two days after the strike, the Dollar Shipping Company agreed to pay a six month's compensatory salary to those who were laid off.¹¹⁹

The success of the strike came as much from the external political events that affected unions as from New York's Chinese. The National Recovery Act's Section 7a (1933) and later the National Labor Relations Act (1935) allowed unions to organize

¹¹⁹ Chinese Vanguard, June 26, 1937. 2; Kwong, Chinatown, New York (1979), 123

aggressively, while the Depression made the need to organize more urgent. The success of the strike once again demonstrated an increasing class consciousness of American labor forces. As Charles Frankly described it, "There was apparently a slight shift from race consciousness to class consciousness [among unions]."¹²⁰ In the case of Chinese seamen, the NUM encouraged the fight for union collective action. Had the LYS not received such encouragement, the struggle would not have enjoyed as much success, as the LYS experience demonstrated.

The success of the strike also illustrated the ability of an independent Chinese labor union to protect its workers' interests. The formation of the LYS and its involvement in the American labor movement demonstrated the increasing class consciousness of New York' Chinese seamen. In their struggle for economic benefits, they also sought racial equality.

The Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance (CHLA)

Unlike the CUC and the LYS, the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance (CHLA) was a new kind of trade union founded by a group of Chinese laundrymen in New York in 1933 in response to the Depression. In order to survive the Depression, they united to protect the interests of Chinese small businesses. Their activities reflected

¹²⁰ Cited in Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, "Or Does It Explode?" Black Harlem in the Great Depression (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 112

the desire of New York's Chinese to claim equal rights as a minority ethnic group. By allying with other American organizations to demand better working conditions and an improved quality of life, the CHLA moved into mainstream society.

According to one account, approximately 30,000 Chinese lived in New York City in 1930. One-third of the working population in the Chinese community was involved in the laundry business in Manhattan and increasingly in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens.¹²¹ Most Chinese laundries were one-person small hand laundries. Some laundrymen shared a business with one or two partners. During the Depression, the laundry business suffered great losses. As unemployment increased, fewer New Yorkers could afford to use laundries. Those who could afford it brought in fewer items. Many laundries went out of business for lack of customers; others had to cut prices and provide extra services in order to remain solvent.

When Chinese laundries offered free mending and free pick-up and delivery, the extra services became the subject of racist criticism. In April, 1932, an article in one of the laundry trade journals, Progressive Laundryman, attacked the Chinese laundries' policy of regular pick-ups at their customers' homes. The article assumed that the regular pick-ups by the Chinese laundrymen took

¹²¹ Bendiner, "Chinese, Japanese" in "Chinese in New York, Present Distribution in New York," Federal Writers's Project, WPA, Box 1, Article 1-11, Folder #50, (1936-1940), Microfilm; Leong, Chinatown Inside Out (1936), 96-97

away business from non-Chinese laundries.¹²²

At the same time, a newly formed white laundry trade organization launched a cartoon poster campaign showing Chinese laundrymen with queues and buckteeth using their spit to wet the clothing before ironing.¹²³ Attempting to squeeze Chinese laundries out, the laundry trade association further demanded that the Chinese laundries abide by their minimum prices.

To push their case, the laundry trade association went to the city authorities for support. In March 1933, the New York City Board of Aldermen, in support of the laundry association, proposed a city ordinance requiring a twenty-five dollar annual registration fee for hand laundries. Most Chinese laundries were self-owned or one-person small businesses that could make profit of only four hundred dollars annually. They could hardly raise the money to afford the required fees. In addition, this laundry ordinance required one-person laundries applying for licenses to post a one thousand dollars bond to cover the possible loss of customers' property.¹²⁴

The attacks and restrictions were not new to those Chinese immigrants who had suffered as scapegoats during economic

¹²² Progressive Laundryman, April, 1932, 19; Kwong, Chinatown New York (1979), 63

¹²³ Leong Gor Yun, Chinatown Inside Out (1935), 104

¹²⁴ Chen, "The Chinese community in New York: 1920-1940" (1990), 59

recessions since the 1870's. As usual, Chinese laundrymen went to the CCBA for help, as it was considered a representative body of the Chinese community to protect the interests of Chinese immigrants in a hostile American environment. Yet, to the Chinese laundrymen's great disappointment, the CCBA did not show the appropriate concern over their suffering. Despite charging laundrymen money for looking into the matter, the CCBA did not take any substantial action.

Resentful of this example of the CCBA's corruption, the Chinese laundrymen bitterly criticized the CCBA for taking advantage of their grievances. All the "holy CCBA" tried to do, the Chinese laundrymen accused, was to use the laundry fee crisis to make more money for itself.¹²⁵ Despite its title as a benevolent association, the CCBA charged big money to look into the matter. The CCBA "exploited us in disguised names. It failed to protect our interests and, worse," Chinese laundrymen complained. "It damaged our business."¹²⁶ Therefore, New York's Chinese laundrymen decided to form an independent organization to protect their interests.

On April 26, 1933, under the slogan "Laundry Alliance for the

¹²⁵ The Chinese Nationalist Daily, April, 1933, 19; Kwong, Chinatown New York (1979), 65

¹²⁶ The Chinese Nationalist Daily, April 24, 1933, 1; Renqiu Yu, To Save China, to Save Ourselves: The Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance of New York (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1991), 35

Laundrymen", the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance (CHLA) was formally established in New York City. Headquartered on the top floor of a building at 196 Canal Street, its first mass meeting held in a Catholic Church on Mott Street reportedly drew several thousand Chinese laundrymen.¹²⁷

At the meeting, the CHLA issued a declaration calling for change that reflected the suffering of the Depression and the increase in institutional racism:

Recently the New York City Council of Aldermen proposed a discriminatory ordinance against hand laundries. If the ordinance is unfortunately passed and becomes effective on July 1, tens of thousands of Chinese laundrymen would be stranded in this country,.... That's why we have to fight against it with every effort. However, we Chinese laundrymen in New York City never had a formal organization of our own. ... The CCBA and the organizations under its control cannot represent our case to the City government. They are but taking this chance selfishly to serve their interests.

Based on these reasons, we set up the New York Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance, With such an organization we can not only unite ourselves to fight the City government collectively so as to abolish the discriminatory ordinance, but also prevent such

¹²⁷ Thomas Chow, "Chinese Laundry Association," Record Sub-Series: "Chinese In NY," Federal Writers' Program, New York City, WPA Folder #48 Description: Organizations, New York City Municipal Archives, Microfilm, Feb. 8 1937, 2.; The Chinese Nationalist Daily reported that over one thousand Chinese laundrymen participated in the rally. The Chinese Nationalist Daily April 25, 1933, 3; Leong reported an even smaller figure of more than six hundred Chinese attended. Leong, Chinatown Inside Out (1936), 92

discrimination from occurring in the future.¹²⁸

Immediately after its foundation, the CHLA proceeded to challenge the city ordinance. On May 23, the CHLA sent its two representatives, Lei Zhoufeng, the first president of the CHLA, and Zhu Xia, along with William M. Chadbourne, a lawyer, to appeal to the city government at a public hearing on the laundry ordinance held by the Public Welfare Committee of the Board of Aldermen.

At the hearing, Lei and Zhu insisted that the services provided by diligent Chinese laundrymen to their customers were welcomed by the residents of New York City, and that the proposed city ordinance was not in accordance with the principle of public judgment. Besides, most Chinese laundries were small businesses run by self-employed, often single individual, which could hardly raise the money to afford the required fees; therefore the ordinance discriminated against Chinese laundries.

Moreover, Lei and Zhu argued that the proposed laundry code discriminated against all small businesses, as no small businesses, whether Chinese or non-Chinese, could afford the required fees. Therefore, the two representatives claimed, the CHLA was not simply seeking protection for the Chinese laundry business, but rather seeking justice for all small businesses.

After the hearing, the Public Welfare Committee passed the

¹²⁸ The Chinese Nationalist Daily, April 24, 1933. 1; Renqiu Yu, To Save China, to Save Ourselves (1991), 35

laundry ordinance with significant modifications. It reduced the registration fee from twenty-five dollars to ten dollars, and the security bond from one thousand to one hundred dollars.¹²⁹

The CHLA considered the modification of the ordinance an encouraging victory that prevented the bankruptcy of hundreds of Chinese small businesses. Without the CHLA's effort, thousands of Chinese would have lost their jobs while the number of unemployed was increasing nationwide. Inspired by the victory, more Chinese laundries joined the CHLA. A few months after the modified ordinance was announced, the new organization claimed two thousand members.¹³⁰

However, this triumph of the CHLA over the "bond ordinance" cannot be simply interpreted as a victory in business disputes between the Chinese and non-Chinese laundries. Chinese laundries acknowledged the importance of business stabilization. They intended to seek rules that would apply to all laundry businesses but they insisted on an equal base.

Chinese laundry workers initiated efforts to cooperate with other non-Chinese laundrymen to stabilize prices in the laundry

¹²⁹ Thomas Chow, "Chinese Laundry Associations" Feb. 8, 1937, 2, Federal Writers' Project, WPA, Folder # 48, (New York Municipal Archives, 1936-1940), Microfilm; Leong Gor Yu, Chinatown Inside Out (1936), 88

¹³⁰ Thomas Chow, "Chinese Laundry Associations" Feb. 8, 1937, 2, Federal Writers' Project, WPA, Folder # 48, (New York Municipal Archives, 1936-1940), Microfilm

business. On July 27, 1933, the Chinese laundry organization made a public announcement declaring that they and the non-Chinese laundrymen both intended and wanted to cooperate in business regulation.¹³¹ In order to protect their business interests, the announcement stated that Chinese laundrymen were willing to charge twelve cents for washing a T-shirt, the same amount, that the non-Chinese laundries charged.¹³²

The victory of CHLA over the registration fee and the laundry ordinance also demonstrated to the Chinese public the efficiency of an independent organization like the CHLA. Instead of the huge fees the CCBA charged for the ordinance case, the CHLA spent only a few hundred dollars in the court process.¹³³ The victory brought hope for those who were seeking independence from the CCBA.

Towards the end of 1934, another contentious issue disturbed the Chinese community. The controversy started when the License Department of New York issued an order requiring laundry owners to prove their legal status in this country before new licenses could be issued or old licenses renewed. The Chinese community believed that this new regulation was discriminatory towards the Chinese, as many of them could not submit a "proper" document to support their

¹³¹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, July, 6, 1933

¹³² Ibid

¹³³ Renqiu Yu, To Save China, To Save Ourselves: The Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance of New York (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992)

legal status in the United States since, under the existing naturalization laws, Chinese were restricted from both freely immigrating and gaining citizenship.

Besides, this new order would also jeopardize the livelihood of the Chinese in business in New York. By the end of 1934, there were 8,000 licenses issued by the city government to the Chinese laundries. About 500 license holders were heads of families.¹³⁴ If their license could not be renewed, the lives of laundrymen's families would be severely affected. Further more, it would also worsen an already shaky job market.

Confronting the situation, the CHLA immediately took action to oppose this new ordinance. It demanded a public hearing which was granted by the License Department. In addition, the CHLA also began a campaign to win public support, circulating petitions for signatures from both New York's Chinese and Americans.¹³⁵

The Chinese protest movement drew attention and sympathy from the American Friends of the Chinese People, an organization formed in January 1933 by a group of American intellectuals to seek a better understanding between Chinese and Americans. Its major concern focused on American foreign policy toward China. The

¹³⁴ These figures were estimated by the president of the CCBA. Thomas Chow, "Chinese Population in New York", Jan. 11, 1937, 2, WPA Folder #50, Microfilm

¹³⁵ Thomas Chow, "Chinese Laundry Association," in "Chinese In NY," Feb. 8. 1937, 3 Federal Writers' Program, WPA, Folder# 48, Microfilm

proposed license renewal policy, discriminatory toward New York's Chinese, drew the attention of the American Friends of the Chinese People. Perceiving the crisis, the association convened an emergency conference, during which members formed a committee to support the Chinese community at the final hearings for the new license ordinance.¹³⁶

Impressed by both the determination of the Chinese protesters and the positive support from the American association, the License Department withdrew the order in the first week of November. The cancellation of the proposed license ordinance can be counted as the second major victory for the CHLA since its establishment in 1933.

The Alliance considered the victory their greatest achievement.¹³⁷ Moreover, the CHLA was conscious of the importance of the support of the American organization in its victory. In its struggle against the unequal treatment of Chinese New Yorkers, 3.20 members of the CHLA increasingly showed their desire to integrate and ally with other groups to improve their living standards. By participating in activities organized by other American

¹³⁶ Thomas Chow, "American Friends of the Chinese People," Oct. 28, 1936, Record Sub-series: Chinese In NY, Description: Organizations, Federal Writers' Program, WPA, Folder# 48, Microfilm

¹³⁷ Thomas Chow, 'Chinese Laundry Association,' in "Chinese In NY," Feb. 8, 1937, 4 Federal Writers' Program, WPA, Folder# 48, Microfilm

associations, they showed a growing consciousness of the importance of cooperating with non-Chinese trade unions and groups. When the National Industrial Recovery Act was enacted in 1933, the Chinese laundry trade was quick to support it. On September 13, 1933, the CHLA mobilized more than five hundred of its members to participate in a city wide pro-NIRA march in New York City.¹³⁸

In 1934, the CHLA sent a delegation to Carnegie Hall in New York City to attend a mass meeting of two thousand people representing sixteen service trades.¹³⁹ A representative of the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance was chosen to speak on behalf of more than ten independent laundry organizations. While speaking for all laundry workers, Louis Wing, the representative also expressed the desire of Chinese laundrymen to have equal access to a decent life. Mrs. Whitney, then Deputy Commissioner of Licenses, strongly supported the laundrymen's goals as expressed by Wing:

We Chinese laundrymen are just as desirous and just as anxious to obtain higher living standard as any man on the face of this earth. Unhealthy living conditions and hard labor are just as disagreeable to us as to anybody else. Our laundrymen will support whole heartedly any movement that has for its aim the bringing about of decent and human standard of life in industry and otherwise.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Kwong, Chinatown New York (1979), 87

¹³⁹ Leong Gor Yun, Chinatown Inside Out (1935), 104

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 105

Despite the exclusion laws that remained in effect until 1943, New York's Chinese during the Depression for the first time spoke publicly about their desire to get rid of unhealthy living conditions and hard labor. Their efforts to be accepted as part of the American society won recognition and support from American organizations.

As an independent organization, the CHLA increasingly perceived its responsibility to provide services and aid for the benefit of its members. The door of the CHLA was also open to those members who were in trouble. Four professional lawyers, hired to deal with the State Labor Department and housing authorities, provided services to assist members in reporting blackmail and theft to the proper authorities. Negotiating with the landlords regarding tenement rent was also a part of the CHLA's job.¹⁴¹ William M. Chadbourne was one of the lawyers who successfully assisted the CHLA in winning the laundry ordinance case.¹⁴²

In addition to lawyers, the CHLA also employed four doctors to advise its members on health issues. Free medical treatment was provided to poor patients, who were also given the privilege of purchasing medicine in Chinatown pharmacies at a fifty percent

¹⁴¹ Chen, "The Chinese Community in New York," (1990), 58

¹⁴² For a brief biographical sketch of William M. Chadbourne, see John W. Leonard, Who's Who in Jurisprudence: A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary Lawyers and Jurists (1925), 249

discount.¹⁴³ In the event of a member's death, twenty-five cents was collected from each member as a compensation fund to help the immediate family of the deceased. A special fund was set aside by the association for laundry workers who were out of work.¹⁴⁴ By providing various assistance to its members, the CHLA increasingly became an important welfare agency for its members.

The CHLA was originally established as a hand laundry trade association to combat the Depression. Independent from the CCBA, it successfully protested against unfair treatment from American trade unions and the city government. Its success over the annual registration fee and the security bond as well as over the license issue, marked a victory in the demand for racial equality. In search of equal treatment, members of the CHLA also actively participated in mainstream events. Their engagement in the city wide pro-NIRA march in New York City and in the laundry business meeting demonstrated the desire of New York's Chinese to integrate into society.

The Chinese American Restaurant Association of Greater New York

The Chinese American Restaurant Association of Greater New York (CARA) was another important Chinese trade organization that emerged during the Depression.

¹⁴³ Chen, "The Chinese Community in New York," (1990), 58

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

Chinese restaurants in New York employed a large number of Chinese immigrants. In the 1930's, more than four thousand workers¹⁴⁵ worked at approximately three hundred big and small establishments in the city.¹⁴⁶ During the Depression the Chinese restaurant business was among the first hit by the economic crisis. In the year 1930, more than one hundred and fifty Chinese restaurants were forced to close. In Manhattan's Broadway district alone, the loss amounted to approximately two million dollars.¹⁴⁷ Consequently, large numbers of restaurant workers found themselves jobless. Those restaurants that remained in business were threatened by intensified competition from others as well as from non-Chinese cafeterias.

Confronting the crisis, New York's Chinese in the restaurant business decided to organize to combat the Depression. As a consequence, they formed the Chinese American Restaurant Association of Greater New York (CARA) on May 9, 1932. Members of the Association believed that by making a collective effort, they would survive the economic crisis. They also predicted that such joint effort would "bring about betterment for the industry" in the

¹⁴⁵ Chen, "The Chinese Community in New York," (1990), 54

¹⁴⁶ Thomas Chow, "Chinese Restaurants Association of Greater New York," in "Chinese In NY," Record sub-series, Description: Organizations, March 22, 1937, 1, Federal Writers' Program, WPA Folder #48, Microfilm

¹⁴⁷ The Chinese Nationalist Daily, July 1932

future.¹⁴⁸ The headquarters of the CARA were temporarily located in the Chin Lee Restaurant at 1604 Broadway when it was first established. Later on, it moved to the Far Eastern Tea Garden at 10 Columbus Circle. Its membership extended to both restaurant owners and individual workers. One-sixth of the Chinese restaurants in New York area had joined the association by 1933.¹⁴⁹

This structure represented a new type of trade organization in the Chinese community. Whereas membership in traditional guilds was only open to business owners or proprietors, the unpredictable hardship of the Depression united both restaurant owners and workers to combat difficulties. Individual workers took an active part in the association. By the end of 1933, with worker participation, membership of the CARA doubled.¹⁵⁰

The Board of Trustees were the decision makers. An influential businessman, Lee Fu was the first president of the Board of Trustees and also of the Committee of the General Affairs. He owned the Far Eastern Restaurant at 10 Columbus Circle¹⁵¹ and became more well-known for his charitable contributions on behalf

¹⁴⁸ J. Chen, "Chinese Community in New York," (1990), 55

¹⁴⁹ T. Chow, "Chinese Restaurateurs Association of Great New York," March 22, 1937, 2, WPA Folder #48, Microfilm

¹⁵⁰ Chen, "The Chinese Community in New York," (1990), 55

¹⁵¹ Thomas Chow, "Chinese Restaurants Association of Greater New York," in "Chinese In NY," Record sub-series, Description: Organizations, March 22, 1937, 3, Federal Writers' Program, WPA Folder #48, Microfilm

of the CARA. In the single year of 1935, he donated several times to welfare agencies, such as orphan asylums in the Chinese community.¹⁵²

There were three major agencies in this restaurant association. The Accountant Agency played a key role in business transactions, reflecting the new attitude of New York's Chinese to comply with the U. S. government taxation laws. In order to make their cooperation convenient, the accountant agency provided tax instructions in Chinese and prepared and distributed tax forms to restaurants.¹⁵³

This effort demonstrated that New York's Chinese wanted to be regarded as taxpayers--a new symbol of their participation in American society. Perceiving the importance of following government laws, the CARA also assisted the Chinese business community in understanding the revenue system. In addition to providing tax instructions in Chinese and preparing tax forms, the CARA also worked with the government to educate the Chinese. When the city authority of New York raised new taxes on cigars and liquor in 1935, the CARA advised the Chinese business community to abide by the American laws.¹⁵⁴

The Accountant Agency also dealt with statistical analyses of

¹⁵² Chinese Nationalist Daily, June 3, 1935

¹⁵³ Chen, "The Chinese Community in New York," (1990), 56

¹⁵⁴ J. Chen. "The Chinese Community in New York," (1990), 56

the restaurant business and provided information periodically to owners on total gains or losses in the industry. The second business oriented agency of the CARA was the Investigation Agency. It kept its members well informed about the contemporary business climate and provided updated information on the market price of various products.

While assisting in business matters, the CARA also demonstrated a sincere concern about the job market. The Employment Bureau was the third agency of the CARA to provide aid and services particularly for restaurant workers. By posting employment opportunities, this agency provided information on job openings for the unemployed.

The CARA served as an information center for both restaurant owners and workers. In addition to the major agencies, the CARA also published the Convention Journal, which carried news and information relating to the restaurant trade.¹⁵⁵

The CARA was originally formed as a trade organization to combat the Depression. At the same time, it showed increasing interest in national economic policies. This growing political consciousness was demonstrated in its involvement in mainstream political activities such as the one in August 1933, when it called a mass meeting to urge the active participation of Chinese restaurants in the NIRA program. Enthusiastic about the New Deal

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 58

policy, the CARA organized a propaganda team to promote community support for the legislation. Copies of the act were printed in Chinese and distributed to the restaurants.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, the CARA selected five people to ensure that the establishment and implementation of price and wage codes in the Chinese community accorded with the new legislation. Another example of such involvement was its participation in a city-wide pro-NIRA rally held in New York on September 13, 1933, when the CARA sent its fifty members to demonstrate.¹⁵⁷

The NIRA later caused frustration among the nation's business community and labor unions and was eventually declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1935. However, Chinese New Yorkers in 1933, like other Americans, joined in supporting New Deal efforts to combat the Depression.

The Depression gradually eroded the former isolation of the Chinese community in New York. Because of the unfavorable racially exclusionary conditions from 1882 until 1943, Chinese New Yorkers seldom had a chance to go beyond their own community. Paul C.P. Siu sourly recalled his life as a laundry worker as monotonous and "isolated".¹⁵⁸ The Chinese laborers, he wrote, were treated like "a

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 58

¹⁵⁷ Kwong, Chinatown New York (1979), 87

¹⁵⁸ Paul C.P. Siu, The Chinese Laundryman- A Study of Social Isolation (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 137

thing and a stereotype" by society. They felt they were a person only to be with their fellow Chinese within the social world where people "shared common interest and conventional understanding."¹⁵⁹ Because of the isolated environment, the social world of Chinese laborers was only "located between their quaint working places and their racial Chinatown." They had "no chance, no facilities" for leisure time activities beyond their work.¹⁶⁰

Realizing the problems, the CARA organized cultural activities to break down isolation and to encourage its members to understand that working class culture encompassed more than just work. The idea of leisure rather than work in their spare time created a departure from traditional attitudes and values. In order to pursue the time and space for leisure time entertainment, the CARA endorsed cultural clubs and supported basketball teams for workers. In its effort to inspire its members to join leisure activities, it also became a patron of such outings as trips to scenic spots to expose workers to another side of life than work.

The CARA believed that sightseeing and excursions would help to open its members' minds to an entirely new world.¹⁶¹ It also created an opportunity for young workers to enjoy a healthy social life with workers from other organizations. On August 1, 1932,

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰ Ibid

¹⁶¹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Aug.1, 1932

right after its formation, the CARA initiated a trip to Bear Mountain in New Jersey.¹⁶² This plan received immediate support from other newly formed Chinese organizations New York. The Chinese Women's Association and the Chinese Young Women's Organization, for example, were delighted to join the trip; these two organizations were formed in 1931 for the purpose of improving conditions of Chinese women immigrants.¹⁶³ During the trip, participants enjoyed mountain climbing, rowing on the mountain lake, and swimming in the reservoir, as well as basketball games. A Chinese community newspaper, Chinese Nationalist Daily, reported this trip as a "pioneer work in union history."¹⁶⁴

Roy Rosenzweig suggests that the creation of American working class leisure time and institutions is an expression of a value that challenged and, to some degree, rejected the moral order of America's upper and middle classes.¹⁶⁵ The leisure time activities of New York's Chinese meant more. By participating in sports and sightseeing, they perceived the importance of their true personal value in contrast to the label of "cheap labor." The creation of

¹⁶² Chinese Nationalist Daily, Aug. 1, 1932

¹⁶³ These two organizations also played an important role in supporting the anti-Japanese war in China. See Chapter V for more information.

¹⁶⁴ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Aug.1, 1932

¹⁶⁵ Roy Rosenzweig, Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers, Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920 (New York: Cambridge UP, 1983)

leisure time activities expressed the rejection of New York's Chinese against racial attitudes towards Chinese. Moreover, the concept of leisure rather than work in their spare time created a departure as New York's Chinese attitudes towards life and value changed. It enabled them to move away from isolation and integrate into the larger cultural society.

Conclusion

The Depression was a time of important changes in the Chinese community in New York City. It saw a vibrant organizational movement of Chinese laborers and Chinese small businesses. The CUC, the LYS, the CHLA, and the CARA were among the first and the most active Chinese American organizations to emerge in response to the economic crisis. Although these organizations were originally formed as labor organizations and trade unions to deal with economic difficulties in the 1930's, their demand for equal treatment and legal protection by the American government effectively challenged the legacy of racist exclusion. Therefore, these organizations were also pioneer Chinese American civil rights organizations in New York City.

The successful conduct of the LYS in strikes and the victory over the issues of city ordinances and licenses by the CHLA, for example, provided evidence of Chinese New Yorkers' desire for change. The various activities of these newly established

organizations played a vigorous role in making heard the voices of the weakest and most vulnerable people of society.

In their effort to survive the Depression, Chinese American organizations increasingly showed their interest in mainstream politics. Perceiving the importance of a collective effort for the benefit of New York's Chinese, they reached out to create alliances with other American organizations. Their effort to integrate into mainstream activities demonstrated the increasing self-consciousness of New York's Chinese to be part of American society.

More importantly, the formation of new organizations and their activities during the Depression constituted a strong trend that shook the roots of the Chinese community's traditional social and political structure. Because of existing cultural prejudices and exclusionary legislation, Chinese immigrants were driven to withdraw into their own community for protection. Within their traditional enclaves, the elites of the Chinese social and political hierarchy reenforced a restrictive atmosphere.

During the Depression, as various newly established organizations began to take over responsibilities for the interest of New York Chinese themselves, the CCBA was no longer the only authority to deal with the outside world, nor could it keep its autocratic control within the Chinese community. The role of district associations was also fading away as new organizations were formed without considering the ties of geographic origin or

clan. A new social structure and order were taking shape with the increasing power of new organizations in the Chinese community.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DEPRESSION ON CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

The Depression was a time of important changes in the Chinese community in New York City. In addition to a vibrant organizational movement of Chinese laborers and small businesses, the Depression also witnessed the rise of Chinese American cultural clubs and associations. In their effort to survive the Depression, New York's Chinese Americans involved themselves in society culturally as a means of both personal improvement and social integration.

Discrimination and restrictions against the Chinese in the United States alienated them from the larger American society. Challenging the existing racial prejudice, American-born Chinese proclaimed that they "should be given a better opportunity in social life in America."¹⁶⁶ More significantly, they began to engage in language learning, music and art performances, and sports activities as a way to assert themselves as Americans citizens. It is my purpose in this chapter to explore this involvement. I focus on their organized cultural and educational activities which not

¹⁶⁶ Kit King Louis, "Problems of Second Generation Chinese," Sociology and Social Research, Vol. 16 Sept. 1931- Agu. 1932, 454

only helped reinforce a Chinese identity but also promoted a growing consciousness of an American one.

Educated Young Chinese New Yorkers in the 1930's

Both across the nation and in New York, American-born Chinese were major participants in cultural activities. College students figured importantly in this regard. Scholars, such as Chih Meng and Betty Lee Sung suggest that educated young Chinese Americans distanced themselves from Chinatown Chinese because they considered themselves the elite and did not want to mingle with "low-class" Chinatown Chinese.¹⁶⁷ They stayed within their own student communities as racial discrimination also alienated them from society. The 1937 Directory of Chinese Students in America recorded 1,414 Chinese registered in 262 American colleges and universities in the 1935-1936 academic year, 1,733 in the next academic year. In New York, 280 Chinese were studying in 27 colleges and universities in 1937. Although some were American-born and others were from China, they were both simply recorded as

¹⁶⁷ Chih Meng, Chinese American Understanding: A Sixty-Years Search by Chih Men (New York: China Institute in America, 1981); Betty Lee Sung, The Story of the Chinese in America Their Struggle for Survival, Acceptance, and Full Participation in American Life from the Gold Rush Days to the Present (New York: Collier Books, 1967); Shih-shan Henry Tsai, China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States 1868-1911 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1983); The Chinese Experience in America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986)

"Chinese" in registration records.¹⁶⁸

As I will establish, during the 1930's, a group of college students began to redefine themselves and turned their attention to the welfare of their community. In contrast to scholarly views, the educated tried to overcome the isolation and exclusionary atmosphere of New York's Chinese community. From the perspective of Chinese Americans, H.Y.H. wrote,

it is the vigor and understandability of the second generation of the thoughtful youth, which can eventually be depended upon to change the present social level of hard labor and limited enterprise in emerging and penetrating into other services in general within Chinatown. The younger generation of Chinese immigrants in New York had an inevitable obligation to construct their community into a new center of community as a partnership... of the "melting pot" civilization of America.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Directory of Chinese Students in America (1937); Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1937, no.4. For more information on Chinese students, see Willi Ye, "Crossing the Cultures: The Experience of Chinese Students in the U. S. A. 1900-1925," (Ph.D dissertation, Yale University, 1989); Y.G. Wang, Chinese Intellectuals and the West, 1872-1949, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1966); W. Reginald Wheeler, Henry King and Alexander B. Davidson, ed., The Foreign Student In America-A study by the Commission on Survey of Foreign Students in the United States of America Under the Auspices of the Friendly Relations Committees of the Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association (New York, 1925)

¹⁶⁹ H.Y.H. "Our second generation youth," Chinese Christian Student, June, 1939, 5

The assimilation movement that began at the turn of the century took on even greater significance in the 1930's. Mabel Penghua Lee, a graduate of Columbia University, represented the desires of the students to redefine both themselves and their relationship to the Chinese community. Lee went to Chinatown as a social worker,¹⁷⁰ while Lung Chin and Calvin S. Chin, among others, became coaches of Chinatown sports teams to promote out-of-school activities to involve young Chinatown residents in mainstream recreation.¹⁷¹

Seeking involvement, in contrast to disengagement, students pursued two different approaches. Some participated in activities to reinforce their Chinese cultural heritage and strengthen their American identity. In this effort for a new self-definition, they pioneered the concept of "China pride" as a way to "rediscover the fine heritage of Chinese ancient civilization" and to make China pride a contribution to the "great fabric of American life."¹⁷² Others advocated what was called "American pride" in search of place and identity in society. This approach emphasized equal access for Chinese Americans to the mainstream.

¹⁷⁰ Chinese Christian Student, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, Nov. 10, 1936

¹⁷¹ Chinese Athletic Club Excursion Journal, 1935, Chinatown History Project archives, Chinatown Historical Society

¹⁷² Alice Fong, "A Challenge to the Chinese-Americans," The Wester Student, an occasional supplement to the Chinese Christian Student, November 1932, 2

In their effort to involve themselves in society, young Chinese Americans also moved towards organized participation. More than twenty new organizations spring up during this time, representing different groups of Chinese Americans that cut across gender, class, and generation. These organizations, large and small, along with their activities encouraged informal and formal networks. They created a new agenda specifically geared to the participation of a people previously isolated. More resilient than individuals, these united forces bound New York's Chinese community together to pursue cultural involvement in society.

The Chinese American Cultural Clubs

In search of their self-definition as Chinese Americans during the 1930's, second generation Chinese immigrants created various kinds of cultural clubs. Among them were the Ging Hawk Club, the Chinese Cultural Club, the Chinese Art Club, the Chinese Musicians Association, and the Chinese Athletic Club. These organizations offered some of the pioneering activities that ranged from English language learning and writing contests focusing on Chinese American identity, to sports games that involved the young with other ethnic groups. These activities offered New York's Chinese Americans opportunities to express themselves in ways that built self-confidence for their future in the United States.

The Ging Hawk Club

The Ging Hawk Club was active as a Chinese American youth club. Situated at 32 Mott Street in the center of New York's Chinatown and founded as a girls' organization in the 1930's, it was affiliated with the Young Women's Christian Association in New York. The Ging Hawk Club had a membership of twenty-two girls at the beginning.¹⁷³ Over the next couple of years, it became one of the most active organizations among second generation Chinese immigrants. By 1936, its members included both girls and boys who were American-born Chinese high school and college students. The age of the club members ranged from seventeen to twenty five years.¹⁷⁴

"Ging Hawk Club" literally meant "the club for the inspiration of the Chinese". Being of Chinese descent, the young second generation Chinese immigrants felt affiliated with their ancestral country. Members of the Ging Hawk Club often organized activities to bring China's achievements to the attention of the larger

¹⁷³ Theodora Chan was its appointed leader at that time. Evelyn Lee and Anna Lee became president and vice president of the club in 1933. Chinese Christian Student, Nov.-Dec. 1933

Chan later married William Wong, who became a president of a Chinese students association in the mid 1930's. Both of them remained active in students' activities.

¹⁷⁴ Chinese Christian Student, Vol. XXVI. No.1-2 1936, 8; Louise Chin was the secretary of the organization when Anna Lee became the president. Chinese Christian Student, Vol XXVI June 1936, 2

community. The 1934 October forum at Columbia University celebrating the twenty-fourth anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Republic was an example of such activities.¹⁷⁵ Among the distinguished professors present, William H. Kipatrick, Professor of Columbia University Teachers' College, gave the keynote address. Dr. C.J. Lin, President of Fujing Christian University, Dr. Francis C.M. Wei, President of Hua Chung College, and Julean Arnold, American Commercial Attache to China, also spoke at the forum. In their speeches, both Chinese and American scholars spoke highly of China's achievements in awakening national consciousness to fight against foreign intrusions. Advocating a unified republic in China, speakers also paid tribute to New York's Chinese immigrants for their contributions to the building of their home country.¹⁷⁶

Despite its endorsement of "China Pride", the Ging Hawk Club was concerned about the future of young Chinese Americans in the United States. Realizing that racial antagonism and cultural clashes were major obstacles to the advancement of the young generation of Chinese immigrants, it organized activities to encourage the young to build self-confidence and to establish themselves in American society. Arranging essay contests became

¹⁷⁵ It cooperated with eleven other cultural associations in this event. "October 10 Celebration in New York," Chinese Christian Student, Volume XXV Oct. 1934

¹⁷⁶ To support China in its effort for modernization, New York's Chinese invested in the building of railways, schools and parks in their hometown. Ibid

one of such activities. Through discussions among the young, this club focused on their "American Pride". Its first essay contest, entitled "Where Does Our future lie?" turned out to be successful. The subject made young Chinese consider the issues that all immigrants, particularly the Chinese faced. More important, the contest also emphasized what it meant to be responsible American citizens.

Open to all Chinese American boys and girls in the United States between seventeen and twenty five years of age, the contest requested an essay of 1,000 to 1,500 words in length. It also offered a ten-dollar award for the first two winners. To make the contest professional, the club invited Dr. Mabel Penghua Lee, a Columbia University alumna, and Professor Harry Rathbone of the Department of Journalism at New York University to serve as judges. Dr. Tsue Chuyu and Anna Lee, the president of the Club, were also among the judges.¹⁷⁷ In the third week of June, 1936, the club announced the prize winners of the contest. Chinese Christian Student, a major Chinese American newsletter in New York, published the first prize winning essay.¹⁷⁸

Robert Dunn, a MIT college graduate, won first prize. What Dunn said reflected the growing consciousness of American-born Chinese to be Americans. Convincing his readers of the principles

¹⁷⁷ Chinese Christian Student, Vol. XXVI, No.1-2, 1935, 8

¹⁷⁸ Chinese Christian Student, Vol. XXVI, No.7, June, 1936

of liberty and equality that had protected him and allowed him the chance for education in the United States, Dunn wrote of "owing much pride and gratitude to America" and looked forward to paying the debt he owed to the country.¹⁷⁹ He held that future of Chinese Americans lay in the land where they were born. Confident in the protection of the principle of democracy in the United States, he called on Chinese Americans to "clear up misunderstanding among ethnic groups, and to move towards individual freedom and racial equality." He also appealed to Chinese Americans to break away from self-imposed isolation and develop "a good impression of the Chinese among Americans... through personal contact" as a means of integrating themselves into society.¹⁸⁰

In addition to its endorsement of both "China Pride" and "American Pride" in constructing Chinese American identity, the Ging Hawk Club also organized social activities to introduce the younger generation to American cultures and values. The Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons were the club's busiest times organizing such gatherings. Of its dance parties, the "Thanksgiving Barn Dance" at the Y.W.C.A. at 341 East 17th Street in 1933 was of particular interest.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Robert Dunn, "Where Does Our Future Lie?" Chinese Christian Student, Vol. XXVI, No. 1-2, 1935

¹⁸⁰ Ibid

¹⁸¹ It was held on Nov. 30, 1933. Chinese Christian Student, Nov.-Dec., 1933

Dressed as farmers' daughters, members of the Club greeted their guests at the door of the building. No traditional turkey dinner was served at the party. Instead, "a fifteen pound live turkey was kept in full view" at the Thanksgiving Day party. A Chinese American newsletter humorously commented that this turkey "was probably the only turkey in New York City which lived through Thanksgiving Day." Students from China and young Chinese Americans were invited to the dance party. Professor Henry Schilling of the History Department at Hunter College and his wife were among the guests.¹⁸² A Chinese newsletter reported that "It was a grand time" for young Chinese Americans to get "acquainted with each other."¹⁸³ The warm atmosphere of friendship impressed the participants most. Students from China also enjoyed the party, which gave them an opportunity to make friends with the American-born Chinese in attendance.¹⁸⁴

Social gatherings, it was felt, promoted mutual understanding among Chinese Americans. In June, 1936, the Ging Hawk Club endorsed a farewell meeting at the International House to congratulate students graduating from colleges in the New York City

¹⁸² Ibid

¹⁸³ Ibid

¹⁸⁴ Ibid

area.¹⁸⁵ Hong Dong, vice chairman of the New York Unit of the Chinese Students Christian Association, was invited to preside over the meeting. More than sixty students and their friends participated in the event.¹⁸⁶

The Ging Hawk Club developed rapidly through the 1930's, extending its activities to include forums on China issues, writing contests concerning about the future of American-born-Chinese, and social parties to introduce American culture. Started as a girl's organization, the club and its activities involved both American-born and Chinese students. The club also provided opportunities to promote mutual understanding among young Chinese Americans, and more significantly, it encouraged young Chinese Americans to become more aware of their Chinese heritage while assisting them to build up their self-confidence reinforcing the value of being Chinese Americans in the 1930's.

The Chinese Cultural Club

The Chinese Cultural Club was another important Chinese American cultural organization. Like the Ging Hawk Club, this club promoted an understanding of China's cultural heritage and felt that its obligation was both to "develop Chinese culture among the

¹⁸⁵ "New York Unit in Farewell Meeting for Graduating Students," The Chinese Christian Student, June, 1936

¹⁸⁶ Ibid

Chinese in New York" and adopt the culture of the United States.¹⁸⁷ It focused its activities particularly on language learning both in Chinese and English. In addition, it also kept a library providing books on both Chinese and American civilizations.

Founded by a group of second generation Chinese immigrants in 1933, the Chinese Cultural Club's membership reached around one hundred by 1937.¹⁸⁸ It had managed a free language learning program since its establishment to educate those young Chinese Americans who did not speak Mandarin, the official Chinese language so as to reinforce their Chinese heritage. This class was held once a week, and members as well as other young people were welcome to participate.¹⁸⁹ In addition to the language class, the club also maintained a library, and members of the club made substantial efforts to collect books on Chinese civilization and culture. Though members regularly met once a month to discuss programs, the club and the library were open every night to the general public so that Chinese New Yorkers could come and spend their spare time

¹⁸⁷ "The Chinese In NYC," A report compiled by the WPA Writer's Project, 1938, Chinatown Historical Museum achieves

¹⁸⁸ This club was located on the top floor of the building at 144 Second Avenue. S. Michelson, "Chinese Cultural Club," Chinese in New York, WPA Federal Writers' Project, NYC Unit: Racial Groups in New York, 1936-1940, Folder# 48, (New York City: New York Municipal Archives), Microfilm

¹⁸⁹ Ibid

there.¹⁹⁰

Occasionally the Club also arranged forums and lectures on topics about contemporary China. Editors of the local Chinese press and prominent Chinese visitors from abroad were invited to speak. In 1936, Tao Xingzhi, a famous educator and writer from China lectured on Chinese educational reforms.¹⁹¹ The war against the Japanese in the 1930's spurred Club members' enthusiastic support for their home country.¹⁹²

Again, the Chinese Cultural Club as did the Ging Hawk Club, helped Chinese Americans gain access to the mainstream and establish themselves in society. Activities of this organization often placed emphasis on understanding of the cultural heritage of their adopted land. In addition to the Chinese language class, an English class also met regularly once a week. The club invited WPA workers to teach in their programs.¹⁹³ In addition, English and American literature books were available in the library for those who wanted to learn more after school.¹⁹⁴

The Chinese Cultural Club also arranged social activities. Aiming to help Chinese American youth become less isolated and "to

¹⁹⁰ "Chinese in NY," WPA Writers' Project, 1934

¹⁹¹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 9, 1936

¹⁹² See their activities in Chapter V.

¹⁹³ "Chinese In NYC," Chinatown Historical Museum archives

¹⁹⁴ Ibid

tighten the bond of friendship between Americans and Chinese", members of this club initiated social nights. Again like the Ging Hawk Club, it held dance parties in the club and members were encouraged to bring friends.¹⁹⁵

The activities organized by the Chinese Cultural Club provided opportunities for young Chinese Americans to develop their interests. These efforts offered yet another instance in the larger pattern shaped by those organizations claiming acknowledgement for the Chinese as respected members of the larger community.

The Ging Hawk Club and the Chinese Cultural Club were important organizations involving Chinese Americans in activities to promote the understanding of both their Chinese heritage and their American consciousness. At the same time, other cultural groups arose in the 1930's. Like these two organizations, they had a specific agenda to involve Chinese Americans in special activities such as in art, music and sports. They were equally important in assisting Chinese Americans in their search of both self-definition and social integration.

The Chinese Art Club

The Chinese Art Club was one such organization whose specific agenda was to engage Chinese Americans in advancing Chinese

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

American arts. Ancient Chinese art of different periods had been displayed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and other art museums in New York City before the 1930's. However, modern Chinese American art had been seldom exhibited in public before this period. The establishment of the Chinese Art Club reflected the growing consciousness of Chinese Americans who were searching for self-definition in the 1930's.

Formed at the beginning of 1936, the Chinese Art Club used gallery exhibition as an organizing tool to provide Chinese Americans with opportunities to express themselves. Located at 10 Pell Street in New York's Chinatown, its activities also gained support from the larger society.¹⁹⁶

Its first art show of 1936 immediately drew public attention. The Chinese Christian Student reported it as a successful event as "no such show was ever seen in Chinatown" before. It was considered the first art gallery exhibition of Chinese American artists even though three of the exhibitors had their works shown uptown and were accredited by some known art groups.¹⁹⁷ In 1937, one year after its opening show, the Chinese Art Club opened its second annual art exhibition in its newly founded gallery at 175 Canal Street. Larger, brighter and more spacious, the gallery attracted

¹⁹⁶ Nathan Austubel, "Chinese Organizations," WPA Writers' Project, Folder# 48, Microfilm

¹⁹⁷ Chinese Christian Student, March-April, 1938

more visitors. Two art critics reportedly attended the opening reception of the show, and the function was documented in the art column in a local newsletter.¹⁹⁸

The annual art shows exhibited both Chinese and American themes and art styles, reflecting the vast range of interests of the artists. The combination of Chinese art techniques and American scenery combined in art works of the artists demonstrated an awareness of their advanced Chinese culture and their passion for the United States.

The gallery activities achieved more when fifty art works of fifteen Chinese American association members and nine American artists were presented in its third annual exhibition in March 1938. The themes of the works in the exhibition ranged from the ancient world to the present. In addition to traditional Chinese ink paintings, oil paintings and water color paintings, sculptures and woodcuts were also displayed. K. L. Eng's work, "Refugee", was the center of attention in the 1938 art exhibition. It presented the anger and sorrow of a group of Chinese women and children who were leaving their home to escape Japanese air bombing, looting, and killing.¹⁹⁹

Other paintings depicting the beauty of American landscapes also caught visitors' interest. Mowee Tiant, a water colorist,

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁹ Ibid

painted the tranquility of rural New York. Viewers to the exhibition spoke highly about this work, with one Chinese commentator writing that Mowee's "light and delightful landscape of rural New York" added color to the art show. By visually transferring his passion for the beauty of the land where he was born, Chen Suichang's impressive landscape of Lower Manhattan, a view seen from his Mott Street studio, also captured the public attention.²⁰⁰

Works by other American artists were presented in the gallery as a way of integrating the show into mainstream cultural events. Oronzio Maldarelli's "Dancer", Genoi Pettit and Arthur Schweider's "Life", and Ronnie Elliot's drawing were among the most admired. Guy MacCoy's painting of a Missouri scene drew a lot of attention from visitors. It was considered by many artists a successful example of applying Chinese painting techniques to the American scene. An art critic commented that MacCoy's skillful utilization of the old Chinese line and perspective produced a "completely Chinese mood on a Missouri theme." A Chinese local newsletter reported that the 1938 Chinese Art Club's show demonstrated "considerable advance in quality over previous exhibit."²⁰¹

In addition to art exhibitions, members of the Chinese Art Club also sponsored lectures on art. Some popular Chinese American

²⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁰¹ Ibid

artists were invited to give lectures on art to young Chinese Americans. On March 16, 1938, Chu H. Jor, a well-known artist, was invited to give a special lecture that traced the history of Chinese art.²⁰²

The Chinese Art Club was the first professional organization of Chinese American artists to organize annual gallery exhibitions to provide space and opportunities for Chinese American artists to express themselves through their art works. Giving them a forum to air their feelings, views, and ideas about both China and the United States, the Chinese Art Club and its organized art exhibitions aided young Chinese American artists in rediscovering themselves.

The Chinese Musicians Club and The Cantonians

The Chinese Musicians Club and the Cantonians were Chinese American musicians' associations. Also founded in the 1930's, and located in New York's Chinatown, both were dedicated to musical performances.

Music, an important part of the life of Chinese immigrants, derived from a long shared heritage that cut across boundaries of region, dialect, and class. Before the 1930's, amateur musicians' groups performed traditional Chinese music. Many American-born-

²⁰² Chu's painting, "still-life", had been shown in Grand Central and other uptown galleries. Ibid

Chinese New Yorkers cherished this cultural inheritance. However, American music also had a powerful influence on Chinese Americans, and the establishment of the Chinese Musicians Club and the Cantonians in the 1930's marked the beginning of a Chinese American musical organization dedicated to both Chinese and American music and performance.

Situated in Chinatown at 57 Mott Street, the Chinese Musicians Club had a choir of young Chinese New Yorkers that practiced both Chinese and American songs. Jazz songs were translated into Chinese for the Chinese audiences at performances often held for the public.²⁰³

The club also had a Chinese orchestra that played Chinese music with traditional instruments such as drums, chimes flutes, bells, and shengs.²⁰⁴ Young musicians often held musical evenings open to the public at 55 Mott Street. Their performances attracted American audiences as well.²⁰⁵

The Cantonians was another Chinese American musicians' association. Organized in 1932, it also founded an orchestra of volunteer members from the Chinese community as well as from a broader base, as some of its members were former Columbia

²⁰³ Ibid

²⁰⁴ "The Chinese in NYC," a report compiled by the WPA writer's Project, 1938, 22. Chinatown Historical Museum archives

²⁰⁵ Ibid

University student band musicians. Foo Y Lee was the orchestra's first director.²⁰⁶ Committing themselves to the enhancement of the life of Chinatown residents, these young Chinese American college graduates introduced Western band music to their ethnic Chinese community. They innovated by playing Cantonese local music with Western band instruments. Band music and Chinese music played with Western instruments were new to New York's Chinatown residents. But they developed an interest in them, and attended the Cantonians' performances.²⁰⁷

The endeavor of young Chinese American musicians to introduce Chinese music played with western instruments to an American audience was another way of getting involved themselves in the American society culturally. Young Chinese American musicians also played American music with Chinese musical instruments, a reflection of both their Chinese and American cultural identity.

Young Chinese American members of the Cantonians did not play solely in their own ethnic community. In addition to the performances presented in Chinatown, the Cantonians also played to larger audiences. The association managed "several engagements on Broadway" in an attempt to "expand its influence" into society at large.²⁰⁸ Seeking a place in society, young Chinese American

²⁰⁶ Chinatown Historical Museum Archives

²⁰⁷ Ibid

²⁰⁸ Ibid

musicians found music an alternative way of expressing themselves.

The Chinese Dramatic and Benevolent Association of New York (CDBA)

The Chinese Dramatic and Benevolent Association of New York (CDBA) took its title as benevolent association because it wanted to raise money through its performances to support the unification of China. By introducing Chinese modern art and performances, the activities of this organization not only kept the Chinese in New York close to China but also invigorated the cultural life of New York's Chinese community.

Established in New York in 1926, the CDBA was situated at 165 Bowery Street in New York's Chinatown. The early members of this association were mainly Chinese-born. Educated in China, they joined Chinese American college graduates in arranging for stage performances and sponsoring playwrights. Influenced by China's New Cultural Movement which advocated the use of the vernacular style in Chinese literature and pushed modern themes in dramatic arts, the CDBA introduced Chinatown residents to modern Chinese plays.²⁰⁹ From 1927 to 1936, the Association created and staged five major

²⁰⁹ Chinese Dramatic and Benevolent Association, Tenth Anniversary, Oct. 12, 1936, 15. The Chinese Dramatic and Benevolent Association of New York advocated the use of the vernacular style in its performances to promote democratic ideas. Yaoron Wu, chief organizer of the New York's Chinese Dramatic Association and play writer, wrote in 1936 that the application of vernacular to dramas and plays was vital to the reform movement to modernize drama.

multi-episode plays: "the National Enmity", "Ci Er", "the Bloody Cloud", "Heroic Sons and Daughters", and "Ci Tingkai" to dramatize political issues in China and to emphasize the importance of its unification.²¹⁰

Their performances had a strong effect. Particularly successful was a seven- scenes drama entitled "Ci Tingkai", which eulogized General Ci Tingkai and the soldiers of the 19th Chinese military Regiment in the defensive battles against Japanese occupation in Shanghai.²¹¹ When Ci came to the United States for fund-raising in 1934, three thousand Chinese residents greeted him when he arrived in New York City on August 28. Moreover, he received a "constant stream of American reporters" and "reviewed a

²¹⁰ The Chinese Dramatic and Benevolent Association (Mei Guo New York Meing Zhi Bai Hua Ju Shi) Tenth Anniversary, Oct. 12, 1936, New York's Chinatown Historical Museum archives. This Association performed in support of the Northern Expedition, a military campaign for a unified China. The Northern Expedition was a anti-warlords military campaign for the unification of China. It was launched by the Republic government in China in 1924. The Chinese Communist Party effectively cooperated with the campaign. "The National Enmity" presented Chinese warlords as felonies to the unification of China. "Ci Er", a eight-episode play, dramatized Ci Er, a Chinese general who was devoted his life to the establishment of a constitutional republic in China. "The Bloody Cloud" and "Heroic Sons and Daughters", two four-scene dramas, paid high tribute to the Chinese soldiers and civilians who were fighting against the Japanese occupation of China.

²¹¹ Chinese Dramatic and Benevolent Association, tenth anniversary, Oct. 12, 1936

Chinese parade" of his supporters in Chinatown.²¹²

Active in its support of China, the CDBA also cooperated with other Chinese American organizations. When the Chinese American Aviation Association in New York sought assistance to fund-raising for its training programs to support Chinese military resistance to Japanese occupation, the CDBA arranged drama performances to sponsor this effort.²¹³ On many other occasions, the CDBA helped raise money for war victims in China. Benefit shows to collect money from Chinese New Yorkers to set up a hospital in China exemplified the CDBA's efforts to support China through performance art.²¹⁴

The CDBA's activities emphasized support for China. Its performances also contributed to Chinese Americans New Yorkers' interest in Chinese modern art and performances. Unlike traditional dramas which usually presented ancient princes and princesses in classical language, the CDBA brought a new type of character to the stage. Common people, such as soldiers who devoted their lives to the defense of their country, became major

²¹² Tsai, The Chinese Experience in America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 111

²¹³ The Chinese American Aviation Association was established for the purpose of training young Chinese Americans to be ready to fight side by side with the Chinese in China in support of the anti-Japanese war effort.

²¹⁴ Chinese Dramatic and Benevolent Association, Tenth anniversary, Oct. 12 1936

characters in these plays. Members of the CDBA often sought to artistically improve their performances. They attended lectures on the subject of the art of theater. On March 16, 1936, the association invited George Kin Leung, a Chinese dramatist, to give a lecture on Chinese theater to its members. After the lecture, they had a technical discussion on the tradition and demonstration of Chinese art.²¹⁵

The CDBA provided young Chinese New Yorkers with a powerful forum to express themselves. Its performances and other organized activities such as fund-raising kept Chinese Americans attached to China culturally and politically by arousing them to participate in supportive activities.

The Chinese Athletic Club

In addition to art, music, and drama clubs, the sports teams organized in this era were perhaps the most significant of the efforts of Chinese Americans to move into the mainstream of American culture. The Chinese Athletic Club of the 1930's became the leading athletes' association supervising teams in basketball, swimming, and boxing.

Sports differed from other cultural activities in requiring participants to be more aggressive. The courage and self-confidence needed in games and competitions assisted young

²¹⁵ Chinese Christian Student, March-April, 1938, 7

Chinatown residents in building pride and strength as they stepped out of their ethnic community.

The Chinese Athletic Club was originally formed in 1911, when a group of young Chinese Americans sought access to the sports facilities of the Church of All Nations.²¹⁶ During World War I, as many club members left to serve in the American army, the Chinese Athletic Club ceased to exist as an ethnic sports team under the Church of All Nations. Some remaining members joined other integrated teams.²¹⁷ It was not until the early 1930's that the Chinese Athletic Club revived.

Independent of any affiliation, the club created more sports attractions, and more young Chinese Americans participated in its organized sports activities. In the 1930's, as before its membership continued to be composed largely of American-born Chinese.²¹⁸ The different athletic teams such as the basketball team, the swimming squad, and the boxing team were sub-divided according to different age groups. Chinese American athletes in

²¹⁶ The Church of All Nations welcomed different groups of ethnic youth in the Lower East Side of Manhattan to come together to join its secular programs. As requested, the Chinese Athletic Club was formed in 1911 in order to use the church's athletic facilities. "Youth Sports League," 17, Chinatown History Project archives

²¹⁷ Interview with Lung Chin. "Oral history," 21, Chinatown Historical Museum archives

²¹⁸ Ausubel, "Chinese Athletic Club," Chinatown Historical Museum archives

junior teams were between ten and fifteen years of age. The senior teams usually consisted of athletes under twenty years of age.²¹⁹ Former team members and athletes were invited to be coaches. Lung Chin, who was on the first Chinese basketball team in 1920, became a basketball coach in 1930 while he was coaching the Police Athletic League of New York.²²⁰ Calvin S. Chin became the coach of the swimming squad in 1934.²²¹

In addition to former team members, popular sports stars were also invited by the Chinese Athletic Club to coach young Chinese American athletes in an effort to professionalize its sports teams and get them ready for games and competitions with other ethnic groups. Bill McCulloch, a former basketball star in St. John's University and a sports writer for the Brooklyn Times Union, was invited as a basketball team coach in 1934. Stanley Guest became a coach of the boxing team in 1932, and stayed until 1935.²²²

Under these coaches' guidance, Chinese American youth sports teams trained vigorously and improved their standing in competitions. In 1934, teams began to participate in games and competitions outside their own Chinese community. On January 7,

²¹⁹ "Chinese Athletic Club," Chinatown Historical Museum archives

²²⁰ Ibid

²²¹ Chinese Athletic Club Excursion Journal, 1935, 21. Chinatown History Project, Chinatown Historical Museum archives

²²² Ibid

1935, a Chinese local newspaper reported that the Chinese Athletic Club would send its teams to compete against other ethnic sports teams at a sports event to be held on the Prospect Hall Court in Brooklyn.²²³ Its basketball team played a team from Brooklyn on a Brooklyn court where the Chinese Five beat the "Templers".²²⁴

The Chinese American sports teams were even more successful in 1935. When McCullogh coached the basketball team, it played eleven games and beat several teams from other ethnic communities, including the Bank Team and the Original Celtic from the Brooklyn district.²²⁵

In addition to their successes in basketball games, Chinese athletes also excelled at boxing. Boxing was not popular among Chinese Americans. However, under Stanley Guest's guidance, several Chinese athletes became successful at this sport. A Chinese American boxer nicknamed "Stan" held a record of fifty victories out of fifty nine bouts as bantam-weight in the professional ring. Leo Gum reached the finals in the 1935 Boxing Tournament at Textile High School. Pinky Chan entered the professional ring and won his first bout in the same year.²²⁶

²²³ Chinatown Historical Museum achieves

²²⁴ The Brooklyn Times Union reported the event. Chinatown Historical Museum archives

²²⁵ Chinese Athletic Club Excursion Journal, 1935, 22, Chinatown History Project, Chinatown Historical Museum

²²⁶ Ibid

The Chinese Athletic Club involved New York Chinatown's young residents in mainstream cultural activities through sports that helped to release the frustration of racism. Their athletic achievements were encouraging to the team players. Tommy Chu, a former Chinese team player, once told an interviewer that he felt racial discrimination "everywhere in New York City".²²⁷ "You needed living quarters, and you saw an apartment for rent in the newspaper", he said, "You could go to those people at 9 o'clock in the morning and knock on their door, ring the bell, and they'll tell you that they had just rented it." Frustrated and helpless, Chu told his interviewer that he did not feel the same way when he played games. "At least in sports," Tommy Chu said, "there was the potential of defending your pride by defeating the opponent."²²⁸

Chinese American athletes found sports a powerful institution in which to express themselves as proud American citizens. They were encouraged to win when they went to play, as winning was considered an important way for young Chinese Americans to gain self-confidence.²²⁹ However, the importance of sports was not simply a matter of achievement and self-definition. Team sports provided

²²⁷ Tommy Chu, "Oral history," 21, Chinatown Historical Museum archives

²²⁸ Ibid

²²⁹ "When you go out there, you play to win" was one of the major principles of the Chinese Athletic Club. Lung Chin, "Oral history," 19, Chinatown History Project

a mode of contact between Chinese American youth and other ethnic groups.

"In our free time, we used to stay right in Chinatown," Hong Wu, a former team member recalled,²³⁰ because "the Italian kids would taunt us."²³¹ They often scorned that "Chinese were afraid to cross Canal Street."²³² Sports activities engaged young Chinese Americans in confronting outsiders directly. Through sports, a new relationship between young Chinese Americans and players from other ethnic groups was established. A team leader recalled that while they played against each other, they started to get to know each other. After several games, the Italian kids became friendly towards Chinese boys.²³³

Sports, like other cultural activities, aided both the physical and the psychological welfare of the participants. Aiming to integrate themselves into mainstream society, the Chinese Athletic Club and its organized sports activities and games helped New York Chinatown's young residents to step out of their ethnic community. By providing an opportunity for Chinese Americans to

²³⁰ "A preliminary discussion," Youth Sports League, 1910-1950, 15; Chinatown History Project, Chinatown Historical Museum archives

²³¹ Tommy Chu, "Oral History," 19, Chinatown Historical Museum archives

²³² Ibid

²³³ Ibid

confront and cope directly with outsiders, sporting activities also inspired the young generation of Chinese immigrants to be self-confident and self-reliant. Participation in team sports thus helped young Chinese Americans to develop a sense of community, unity and strength.

Conclusion

The Great Depression fostered numerous changes, particularly in the young generation of Chinese immigrants. They participated in cultural activities as a way to claim themselves as Chinese Americans. Sports teams, art and musical clubs, and cultural associations along with their organized activities were grassroots attempts by Chinese Americans to integrate themselves into American society. Although different in program and agenda, these organizations and their activities formed a strong trend towards crossing the cultural barriers in the United States. The social world of Chinese immigrants no longer remained, as Paul Siu once described, "their quaint working places and their racial Chinatown."²³⁴

²³⁴ Paul Siu, The Chinese Laundryman, A Study of Social Isolation (New York: New York University Press, 1953, 1987), 138

CHAPTER IV.
THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DEPRESSION ON POLITICAL
ORGANIZATIONS

The period between 1930 and 1945 saw the emergence of a politically mature young generation of American-born Chinese. Just as the workers in their labor organizations and the young in their cultural organizations tried to break down the barriers of exclusion, Chinese New Yorkers adopted a new political strategy and participated in mainstream political activities as a means of surviving the Depression. This chapter will present evidence that demonstrates the political consciousness of New York's Chinese Americans.

Traditionally, Chinese immigrants were depicted as a group who stayed away from any possible entanglements with the world outside their community, because of racial discrimination. Recent scholars suggest that because of racial segregation, the Chinese in the United States usually turned their political zeal to what was happening in their homeland rather than becoming involved in American politics.²³⁵ These explanations are true in many ways.

²³⁵ L. Eve Armentrout Ma, Revolutionaries, Monarchists and Chinatowns-Chinese politics in the Americas and the 1911 Revolution (Honolulu: Hawaii UP., 1990); Him Mark Lai, The

However, as I will establish in this chapter, the Chinese in the United States, especially the Chinese in New York, became politically conscious in the 1930's. Involvement rather than disengagement in American politics was a major shift in their movement to claim themselves as Chinese Americans.

The Depression and Chinese Americans

The Great Depression was the most severe economic crisis in American history. It caused unemployment, bankruptcy, and starvation. Job shortages during the Depression reinforced racial antagonism. Whites in many southern cities demanded that all blacks be dismissed from their jobs. In 1930, the Black Shirts, a political organization in Atlanta, launched a campaign with the slogan "No Jobs for Niggers Until Every White Man Has a Job!"

As the Depression deepened, African Americans suffered from greater unemployment than they had in the past. Although many blacks migrated to the cities in the North searching for work, the situation in the North was no better than in the South. In New York, black unemployment was nearly 50 percent.²³⁶ The unemployment

Chinese of America 1785-1980 (San Francisco: Chinese Culture Foundation, 1980); Gloria H. Chun, "'Go West...to China': Chinese American Identity in the 1930's," K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, ed., Claiming America--Constructing Chinese American Identities During the Exclusion Era (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 174

²³⁶ Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, "Or Does It Explode" Black Harlem in the Great Depression (New York: Oxford UP, 1991)

rate was even higher in other Northern cities. Many blacks became homeless.

Hispanic Americans were subject to similar patterns of harsh experience during the Depression. Many Hispanics, particularly Mexicans, were forced to leave the country by officials who arbitrarily removed them from relief rolls or simply rounded them up and transported them across the border. Half a million Chicanos left the United States for Mexico in the first years of the Depression.²³⁷

The Depression also worsened the situation for Chinese in the United States. Politically and socially segregated, Chinese immigrants had withdrawn into their own community. However, disengagement did not save Chinese immigrants from what they wished to avoid. Instead, they were frequently victimized whenever there was political and economic turmoil. The Depression reinforced longstanding patterns of discrimination. The majority of Chinese Americans in New York City continued to work in Chinese-owned laundries and restaurants. They could hope for no job opportunities outside the world of Chinatown. Chinese American college graduates found it more difficult to move into mainstream professions during the Depression. They suffered from increasing competition for even low-paying jobs such as stockgirls and

²³⁷ Abraham Hoffman, Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (Tucson University of Arizona Press, 1974)

salesmen, though they had college degrees.

Chinese immigrants had suffered racial discrimination since the enactment of the exclusion laws. Many Chinese immigrants hoped that education could bring improvement for their children. They took advantage of the American free public education system and worked hard to seek possibilities for their children's future.²³⁸ The Depression destroyed the expectations of many Chinese immigrants. The reinforcement of racial discrimination during the Depression also jeopardized the desire of young generation Chinese immigrants to build up their careers in the United States. For example, Lily, a law major at Barnard College who did not give her full name during an interview, said that she was looking for a job in American law firms. After an unsuccessful search in her profession she was prepared to accept any kind of job. However, she could not find a position, even as a salesgirl in a Manhattan department store: at the job interview, she had been informed that she could not be hired because she was "Chinese". She told Thomas Chow that she was born in the United States, but treated like a

²³⁸ After finishing grammar school, the majority of the younger generation of Chinese immigrants were forced to drop out of school and to join the work force to help their families. However, some managed to continue their education. Approximately 2,000 registered in American public schools and colleges in the early 1930's. Flora Belle Jan, "An American-Born Looks at Young Chinatown," Chinese Christian Student, Jan. 1931, 1

foreigner.²³⁹

Another example of the racial barriers for Chinese American college graduates searching for careers was in Y.'s case. Y., a college graduate who specialized in engineering, was told by his job interviewer from the New York State government that he could not get the job he applied for, because it would be too tough for him to handle American workers.²⁴⁰

Commenting on the racially exclusionary trend in the job market during the Depression, Flora Belle Jan, a Chinese American college graduate, wrote scornfully in 1931 that, "With thousands of fair-haired, blue-eyed collegians ... looking for a job", there was apparently "little chance for Chinese American youth" to squeeze in.²⁴¹ With few or no job prospects in the society at large, Chinese American college graduates had no choice but to look for

²³⁹ Thomas Chow, "Interview with young Chinese American college graduates in 1934," Chinese in NYC, WPA Writers' Project, Folder #48 (New York City: New York Municipal Archives), Microfilm

²⁴⁰ Hsuan Julia Chen, "The Chinese Coming in New York, 1920-1940" (Ph.D Dissertation, American University, 1941), 91
A few young Chinese American college students received job offers. They immediately found that they were unable to continue to work.

An Armour Institute of Technology student secured a job in a radio company only to find the company go bankrupt a few months after he was hired. See Flora Belle Jan, "An American-born Looks at Young Chinatown" The Chinese Christian Student, Jan. 1931, 7

²⁴¹ Flora Belle Jan, "An American-Born Looks at Young Chinatown," Chinese Christian Student, January 1931, 7

opportunities within the Chinese community. For example, Thomas Low, a college graduate, received "a clerkship in a Chinese shop" after he failed to get a professional job outside his own ethnic community. Low was described as a brilliant and hard-working student. His professors and schoolmates predicted "a wonderful future" for him when he was a junior college student. He himself was confident that he would get a position "in a American firm" after graduating from college. However, he eventually ended up working in a Chinese store in New York's Chinatown.²⁴²

Others participated in family businesses directly after graduating from college. They followed the occupations of their fathers in store-keeping, or in the restaurant and laundry business. Peter Lee became involved in his family's tea trading business in New York's Chinatown after he graduated from Columbia University.²⁴³ A 1932 Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate returned to New York only to find himself working in a meat packing company, taking orders from Chinese restaurants and stores.²⁴⁴

Frustrated with the situation in which they were trapped and disillusioned by the lack of job prospects in the society at large, a few Chinese American college graduates became cynical. Some,

²⁴² Ibid

²⁴³ Chinatown Historical Museum archives

²⁴⁴ Hsuan Julia Chen, "The Chinese Community in New York: 1920-1940" (Ph.D. Dissertation, American University, 1941), 91

like Fred Wong, with a Master's degree in commerce, took to gambling. They were seen as "always playing Ma Jiang in a corner bazaar in Chinatown" after being repeatedly rejected for jobs.²⁴⁵ Others left the United States. A Chinese American college graduate told a reporter after he decided to go to China that, after having "absorbed a bitter diet of racial prejudice," he could not be happy living in the United States any more. He decided to leave the United States after his career advancement had been limited by racial intolerance in the job market.²⁴⁶ An estimated 20% of the American-born Chinese went to China in the 1930's.²⁴⁷

Depending on education as a solution to their problems failed. Realizing that their isolation compounded the problem during the Depression and education alone could not rescue them from racial discrimination, second generation Chinese immigrants increasingly

²⁴⁵ Flora B. Jan, "An American-Born Looks at Young Chinatown" The Chinese Christian Student, January, 1931, 7

The Chinese Christian Student was published monthly from 1927-1947 by the Chinese Students' Christian Association in North America, founded in 1909. It located at 347 Madison Ave. New York City. Vungyuin Ting was the president of the organization in 1936. Rockwood Chin was the treasurer. Wen Hsien Chen was the secretary. Y. E. Hsiao was the general secretary. Arthur A. Young was the editor of the newsletter.

²⁴⁶ S. Chan, Asian Americans: An Interpretive History (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 115

²⁴⁷ Gloria H. Chun, "'Go West...to China': Chinese American Identity in the 1930's," K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, ed., Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities During the Exclusion Era (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 174

turned to political participation as a means of protecting themselves. This growing political consciousness was demonstrated by their involvement in American politics in the 1930's. At the same time, new Chinese American political organizations emerged during this period to engage more of New York's Chinese in American mainstream activities.

Chinese American Political Organizations

The economic depression in the 1930's, combined with years of racist prejudice and denial of rights, shaped the existing political conscience. The growing political consciousness of New York's Chinese to participate in American politics was demonstrated by such organizations as the Chinese American Citizens Alliance, the New York Chinese American Voting League, and the New York Chinese American Committee of the National Democratic Party. Participating in local New York political campaigns and in both the 1932 and the 1936 presidential elections, these groups brought more eligible voters from New York's Chinatown into electoral politics. Involving Chinese immigrants in American politics at large, they helped break down the political silence of New York's Chinese community. No longer confined within their own ethnic community as a means of protection, New York Chinese began to reach out and to involve themselves in American society.

The ardent participation of these organizations in American

mainstream politics reflected the expanding political consciousness of New York's Chinese Americans. By participating in general American activities, they not only challenged the traditional ways in which Chinese immigrants had dealt with a hostile society, but also claimed the political rights of American citizenship denied by the exclusion policies.

The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA)

The Chinese American Citizens Alliance was one of the first Chinese American political organizations determined to exercise the political rights of ethnic Chinese who were American citizens. Originally formed in 1916 as an independent organization by a group of American born Chinese in New York and situated at 6 Mott Street, in the center of Chinatown, this organization took the lead in exercising the political rights of Chinese Americans. Its wartime efforts to support American military recruitment and to endorse the purchase of war bonds, as well as its peacetime efforts to participate in New York local political campaigns, demonstrated the early emergence of the political consciousness of Chinese Americans for civil rights.

They continued their political efforts during the economic depression in the 1930's. Hoping to survive the Depression, the CACA pursued a new political strategy. More ambitious than before, it involved New York's Chinatown residents in the national

presidential election in support of the New Deal as a means of protection. By 1936, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance had a new leader, Liu Xuechao.²⁴⁸

BACKGROUND

To look at the legacy of its political practices in the 1930's, we need to go back to World War I to see how the CACA began its involvement in American politics. Early in 1916, when the United States was waging war against the Central Powers, the CACA was actively involved in U. S. government war propaganda. Members of the CACA put up advertisements along streets and organized rallies in Chinatown in support of American war engagement.²⁴⁹ Moreover, the Alliance also urged young Chinese Americans to join the American army to claim the rights of citizenship by serving their country. Consequently, many of New York's Chinese Americans signed up to join the army. According to the Chinese Reform News, approximately ten percent of soldiers who were recruited from New York were Chinese Americans.²⁵⁰

To make the Chinese American recruitment an important community event, the CACA co-sponsored a big parade in New York's

²⁴⁸ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Nov. 20, 1936

²⁴⁹ Chinese Reform News (Zhong Guo Wei Xin Bao), June 4, 1919

²⁵⁰ Chinese Reform News, Sept. 26, 1917

Chinatown on September 29, 1917 to honor the new recruits . Fifty newly recruited soldiers were in the front marching in the street.²⁵¹ Joining the American army was also an important family event. Recruits had their pictures taken and there were parties to honor them as well.²⁵²

In addition to encouraging young Chinese Americans to exercise their right as citizens to join the army to serve the United States, the CACA also organized activities to inspire Chinese New Yorkers to purchase war bonds. Its war bond purchase drive on October 10, 1917 was a particular success. More than ten young Chinese Americans with the leader of the campaign, Lee Shuhen, went on the street to persuade Chinese New Yorkers to fulfil their "duty and obligation" as American citizens and to make contributions for the country. As a result, \$2,000 war bonds were bought on that day by New York's Chinatown residents.²⁵³

After the war, the CACA continued its political activities, engaging itself in the first post-war local political election. 1917-1918 marked an election year for both the state and the city government of New York. Republicans and Democrats were competing at both levels. The CACA gave its support to the two Democratic

²⁵¹ Chinese Reform News, Sept. 29, 1917

²⁵² Ibid. According to Chinese Reform News, those who were recruited by the army were proud to have an opportunity to serve the country as Americans.

²⁵³ Chinese Reform News, Oct. 24, 1917

and Tammany candidates, Alfred E. Smith and John F. Hylan, in their campaigns for New York State Governor and for Mayor of New York City respectively. Alfred E. Smith was a popular man for his enthusiastic support of progressive reform. His commitment to the improvement of working conditions and the adoption of workmen's compensation appealed to New York's Chinese community. John F. Hylan, the Democratic nominee for New York City Mayor, also received their support.

In order to encourage all eligible Chinese American voters to participate in elections as a means of protecting their political rights, the CACA not only suggested reliable nominees but also organized mass meetings to publicize the elections. On October 31, 1917, the CACA held a mass meeting to engage New York's Chinese American voters in the local government elections, reminding them that "Every Chinese who was born in the United States has the right to vote."²⁵⁴ Moreover, the CACA also put up big posters along Chinatown streets, urging the Chinese community to give its support to the Democratic candidates.²⁵⁵

For more than three decades following the Exclusion Law of 1882, the racism of society frustrated Chinese Americans' efforts to become involved in American mainstream politics. Staying away from possible entanglement with the world outside the Chinese

²⁵⁴ Chinese Reform News, Oct. 31, 1917

²⁵⁵ Ibid

community became part of the protective measures of Chinese immigrants. Moreover, eligible voters in New York's Chinatown were hesitant to use their vote, feeling that racism and their small numbers made the vote an empty privilege. By contrast, the CACA encouraged all eligible Chinese Americans to participate in the election and promised that New York's Chinese community would enjoy "happiness and prosperity" and the "Chinese Americans would benefit" if Smith and Hylan won.²⁵⁶

For the first time in history, the CACA linked the welfare of the Chinese community to that of society at large. Convincing Chinese American voters that good politicians would benefit the Chinese community, the CACA mobilized Chinese Americans to participate in the local elections. Similarly, by engaging this constituency in mainstream politics, the CACA also challenged the self-imposed isolation of New York's Chinatown residents. Both its wartime and peacetime efforts demonstrated the growing political energy of the second generation Chinese immigrants to identify themselves as American citizens.

THE CACA IN THE 1930'S

As a spearhead of the integration movement, the CACA committed itself to awakening Chinese Americans to be responsible citizens of the United States. During the two decades following its

²⁵⁶ Ibid

establishment, the CACA remained an active and independent political organization in New York's Chinatown. When the country was hit by economic catastrophe in the 1930's, the CACA reorganized in order to adjust itself to the political climate.

In the midst of the economic crises, CACA's new political agenda was to support New Deal programs. Seeing the National Industrial Recovery Act as a crusade designed to restore employment, the CACA took part in the National Recovery Administration's organized activities. It sent its members to participate in mainstream mass parades and rallies and to help put up the Blue Eagle emblem signs of the NRA to catch public attention.²⁵⁷ No longer confining itself within the ethnic Chinese community, the CACA extended activities to mainstream events.

The CACA's involvement in the NRA programs was appreciated by the NRA leadership. On October 5, 1933, the New York City NRA authority sent a letter to the CACA, complimenting the association on its contributions to NRA efforts to bring about economic recovery. In this letter, other Chinese organizations, such as the Chinese Laundromat Association and the Chinese American Aviation Association were also praised for their commitment to the NIRA.²⁵⁸

The reorganized CACA remained a political association throughout the 1930's, continuously committing itself to inspiring

²⁵⁷ The Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct 5, 1933

²⁵⁸ The Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 5, 1933

Chinese Americans to use their votes as a way of integrating into society. 1933 was an election year for New York City government. During the election campaign, Fiorello H. La Guardia emerged as a strong political figure. Committed to fighting corruption and to reorganizing city government, La Guardia received major support from his rival party, the Democratic Party.²⁵⁹ Although pro-Democratic, the CACA, among other Democratic organizations, also backed La Guardia's nomination as a fusion candidate.²⁶⁰

The CACA was pleased with Fiorello H. La Guardia's victory in the election. Chen Changsong, the English secretary, sent La Guardia a telegraph congratulating him on behalf of the CACA.²⁶¹ Although greatly exaggerating their importance to his victory as La Guardia won major votes from Italian and Jewish communities, the CACA expressed its expectations for the future of the New York's Chinese community under La Guardia's new administration:

During the local election, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance committed itself to the support of Mr. Fiorello H. La Guardia. As a consequence, Mr. La Guardia won this election. We hope Mr. La Guardia, as a new New York mayor, will contribute to the welfare

²⁵⁹ Thomas Kessner, Fiorello H. La Guardia and the Making of Modern New York (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1989); Chris McNickle, To Be Mayor of New York (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992)

²⁶⁰ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Nov. 8, 1933

²⁶¹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Nov. 8, 1933

of Chinese Americans.²⁶²

The CACA's support of La Guardia was much appreciated by the campaign committee. In early November, 1933, the CACA received a letter from Mr. Maylon, one of the campaign managers for La Guardia. In his letter, Mr. Maylon expressed his appreciation for Chinese American efforts on behalf of La Guardia.²⁶³ In particular, Mr. Maylon praised Ni Zhoupin, a Chinese American political advocate, for his commitment to the successful political campaign:

Mr. Ni Zhoupin was one of the first Chinese Americans who ardently participated in the election. His effort tremendously helped in the political campaign movement. ... I could not find a better way to express my personal appreciation for the great effort that Mr. Ni Zhoupin made to bring the championship for Mr. La Guardia.²⁶⁴

Ni was honored and invited to the campaign headquarters to celebrate the event on November 8, 1933.

In addition to its active participation in local political elections, the CACA was also involved in both the 1932 and the 1936 national presidential elections. Cooperating with the New York

²⁶² Ibid

²⁶³ Ibid. This is the translation of the Chinese newspaper in Chinese. The full name of Maylon was not given.

²⁶⁴ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Nov. 8, 1933

Chinese American Voting League, the CACA played an important role in securing Chinese American votes for the Democratic candidate, Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his 1932 campaign. Again in 1936, joining the New York Chinese American Committee of the National Democratic Party in its effort to support Roosevelt in his second term election, the CACA helped secure more Chinese American votes. With the assistance of these Chinese American political organizations, FDR successfully polled a huge majority in New York's Chinese community for his re-election, approximately three out of every four eligible Chinese voters.²⁶⁵

The actual involvement of Chinese Americans in national politics in both wartime and peacetime demonstrated an attitude toward American mainstream politics changing from disengagement to involvement. Claiming their rights as American citizens by adopting participation as a tactic, the CACA extended its political activities in the 1930's and engaged more of New York's Chinese residents in integrating into society. Following the CACA's lead, more Chinese American political organizations emerged during this period. One such organization was The New York Chinese American Voting League.

The New York Chinese American Voting League (NYCAVL)

²⁶⁵ Hsuan Julia Chen, "The Chinese Community in New York: 1920-1940" (Ph.D. Dissertation, American University, 1941), 98-99

There were about eight thousand documented Chinese Americans in New York in 1930 and many more undocumented Chinese whose children would eventually have the right to vote.²⁶⁶ Perceiving a potential political constituency among this population, both the Republican and the Democratic parties looked for possible votes in the Chinese community. They cooperated with Chinese American political advocates just as the new organizations advocated political involvement in American society. The New York Chinese American Voting League (NYCAVL) was one of these leading political organizations.²⁶⁷

The NYCAVL was formed in 1932. Like the CACA, it was determined to assist Chinese New Yorkers in claiming their rights as American citizens by participating in the national election campaigns. In the first three years of the Great Depression, the Chinese Community suffered tremendous losses. Searching for assistance, Chinese American political activists felt that Franklin D. Roosevelt's campaign policies would be more helpful to their community than the policies of Hoover's administration. Like the CACA, the NYCAVL supported the Democratic Party, and campaigned to get out the vote for Roosevelt by putting up big posters for the

²⁶⁶ According to U. S. Bureau of the census data, there were 1,926 American born Chinese and 6,488 foreign born Chinese Americans living in New York. Ira Rosenwaike, Population history of New York City (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 141

²⁶⁷ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Nov. 7, 1932

election and organizing mass meetings to encourage Chinese Americans to vote.

As the election day was getting closer, the NYCAVL intensified its efforts. On October 31, 1932, the NYCAVL held a big convention for East coast Chinese in New York's Chinatown to support FDR. In order to highlight the political alliance with the Democratic, a way of political integration, the League invited party representatives to speak at the convention.²⁶⁸

Ma Kangming, a Chinese community leader, also spoke. Unlike other speakers, who emphasized FDR's New Deal domestic policies, Ma's speech focused on FDR's foreign policy towards China. Like other immigrant groups who supported American candidates with policies sympathetic to their homeland, his description of FDR's support for the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of China impressed Chinese immigrants. FDR's promise to carry on the Nine Nation's Treaty of the Washington Conference which advocated pressing Japan to return Chinese territory to China also gained a lot of support.²⁶⁹ The convention turned out to be a very successful gathering with more than three hundred people in attendance.²⁷⁰

On November 7, a few days before the election day, the NYCAVL

²⁶⁸ Ibid

²⁶⁹ Ibid

²⁷⁰ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct 31, 1932

organized a rally in New York's Chinatown, urging "every Chinese American" to cast his vote for the Democratic party candidate, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Participants pledged their support for the Democratic Party.²⁷¹

During the 1932 political campaigns, the NYCAVL received enthusiastic support from the Chinese Nationalist Daily in its endorsement of the Democratic Party. The Daily was a local Chinese newspaper. Published in Chinese, it carried news related to the New York Chinese community and the Chinese communities in other cities in the United States. Business activities, political events and cultural performances were the major topics covered by the newspaper. In addition, it also provided information about the political and economic situation in China as New York Chinese were very much concerned about their home country.

By the early 1930's, the paper shifted its coverage from the local and overseas to what was happening in the United States, directing the attention of New York's Chinese to events in the larger society. In 1932, it increased its effort to involve Chinese New Yorkers in the national election through publishing more articles and editorials concerning such social issues as Prohibition and unemployment. On August 1, 1932, the Chinese Nationalist Daily reported a political debate on social issues, indicating that the New Deal proposal was more applicable than the

²⁷¹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, No. 7, 1932

policies of Hoover's administration to the current situation.²⁷² On the 27th of August, it published an article favorably analyzing Roosevelt's proposal to end Prohibition.

The Daily cooperated with the NYCAVL to intensify its efforts to bring more votes for FDR in the following months. On November 2, 1932, it published a long editorial on the differences between Franklin Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover. Indicating that Roosevelt's solutions to the current devastating economic situation would open more opportunities to the jobless and benefit the Chinese community, it encouraged Chinese Americans to vote for Roosevelt.²⁷³ On November 10, the Chinese Nationalist Daily released the results of the election, hailing the Democratic Party's landslide. According to the news report, Franklin D. Roosevelt, the newly elected president of the United States, gained 14,217,414 votes, which was 57.4 percent of the popular vote to Hoover's 3.7 percent.²⁷⁴ At the same time, the Daily also hailed those Chinese American voters who cast their votes for Franklin Roosevelt.²⁷⁵

²⁷² Chinese Nationalist Daily, Aug. 1, 1932

²⁷³ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Nov. 2, 1932

²⁷⁴ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Nov. 10, 1932. This figure is quite different from the figures provided by official announcement. Robert Underhill cites 22,815,539 popular votes for FDR, and 15,759,930 popular votes for Herbert Hoover. FDR and Harry Unparalleled Lives (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996), 56

²⁷⁵ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Nov. 10, 1932

The big victory for Franklin D. Roosevelt demonstrated the popularity of his political and economic policies as persuasive solutions to the economic crisis. It also indicated the desire of the devastated Americans, including Chinese Americans, for radical change.

The Chinese American Voting League played an important role in bringing in Chinese American voters for Franklin D. Roosevelt. The positive commitment and efforts of the organization in the 1932 presidential election demonstrated a tremendous change in the political behavior of Chinese Americans. No longer driven by fear, New York's Chinese Americans stepped out of isolation to seek the political recognition of society through active involvement in American mainstream politics. This new political trend continued, and in 1936, when the nation was preparing for another presidential election, Chinese New Yorkers again participated.

The New York Chinese American Committee of The National Democratic Party (NYCAC)

1936 marked another national presidential election year. The Republicans nominated Governor Alfred M. Landon of Kansas; the Democrats, meanwhile, renominated Franklin D. Roosevelt. In order to cooperate with the Democrats' campaign to re-elect President Roosevelt, pro-Democratic Chinese American activists rallied once more. As a consequence, the New York Chinese American Committee of

the National Democratic Party (NYCAC) came into being.²⁷⁶ Like the CACA and the NYCAVL, the NYCAC also stressed the political rights of Chinese Americans and encouraged them to participate in political activities. More significantly, by affiliating itself with the Democratic Party, the NYCAC represented a new way for New York's Chinese to claim their civil rights as Americans.

Situated at 47 Mott Street in Chinatown, the NYCAC immediately set to work for Roosevelt's re-election. Members of the Party initiated such activities as putting up portraits of Franklin D. Roosevelt along the streets of New York's Chinatown to draw Chinatown residents' attention to the election. They also put up big signs that read "Vote for a Gallant Leader President Franklin D. Roosevelt" in the Chinese community.²⁷⁷

In order to involve as many Chinese American voters as possible into the campaign, the NYCAC emphasized the right of Chinese Americans to vote and urged New York's Chinese to vote for Roosevelt:

It is the time for Chinese Americans to register for the election. Eligible voters should not abandon your right to participate. Exercise your franchise! Come on and hurry up! Let us work together to bring about the reelection of President Roosevelt.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 8, 1936

²⁷⁷ Ibid

²⁷⁸ Ibid

The NYCAC also organized campaign rallies to urge Chinese Americans to take part in the political process. The one on October 17, 1936 was an example of such activities. To make the rally a big event so as to draw potential Chinese American voters to the Democratic Party, the NYCAC invited important Chinese community leaders, Li Gongxing and Li Shengtse, to the rally.²⁷⁹ Delegates from the Democratic Party were also invited to speak to the public in the New York Chinese community to consolidate the cooperation of Chinese Americans and Democrats in the election.²⁸⁰

In addition to inviting delegates from the Democratic Party to come to New York's Chinatown as a way to integrate into mainstream politics, the NYCAC also extended its campaign activities to the larger society. For example, it mobilized New York's Chinese Americans to participate in a city-wide pro-Democratic parade on October 20. A local Chinese newspaper reported that approximately twenty thousand "working class New Yorkers" joined the rally in support of Roosevelt. Among them were Chinese Americans.²⁸¹

During the 1936 presidential election, the Chinese National Daily once again played an important role in politically involving

²⁷⁹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 17, 1936

²⁸⁰ Ibid. At the end of the convention, representatives of both the Chinese community and the Democratic Party exchanged a Chinese National Flag and an American Flag to confirm their cooperation in support of Roosevelt's re-election.

²⁸¹ Chinese National Daily, Oct. 25, 1936

Chinatown residents in American society. It rallied with the New York Chinese American Committee of the National Democratic Party to support the Democratic re-election. Columns of the newspaper were devoted to portraying the achievements of the Roosevelt administration and the significance of the New Deal measures.

On September 17, 1936, George Chinton, a pro-Democratic Chinese American activist, contributed a lengthy article reviewing Roosevelt's domestic policies benefiting the New York's Chinese community:

Only three years have passed since President Roosevelt has taken over the government. Within such a short time, due to his painstaking effort, all kinds of business have entered a state of recovery.... Our Chinese business, for instance, is doing much better than before.²⁸²

In conclusion, Chinton called on Chinese Americans to support President Roosevelt for his second term re-election:

The time for presidential election is near. When November 7 comes, let all Chinese Americans vote for him. I sincerely believe that our welfare will be enhanced, and relations between China and the United States will become closer.²⁸³

²⁸² Chinese Nationalist Daily, Sept. 17, 1936

²⁸³ To impress Chinese Americans, Chinton also spoke of the Roosevelt administration's foreign policy. Chinton confirmed to those who were concerned about China that President Roosevelt had kept his promise to continue his policy of respect for China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Meanwhile, Chinton also

More newspaper articles and editorials concerning various social and economic issues followed. On October 9, the Chinese Nationalist Daily hailed Roosevelt's promise not to increase taxes.²⁸⁴ On October 24, the local Chinese newspaper reported the advantages of the bank deposit policy.²⁸⁵ On October 30, it published a poll on popular opinion on the Republican and Democratic presidential nominees, which indicated the public's favorable view of Roosevelt.²⁸⁶ The day before election day, the Chinese Nationalist Daily made a final drive to involve more Chinese New Yorkers in the election. It published an editorial crediting FDR with the New Deal's program to assist unemployed workers and farmers.²⁸⁷

The local Chinese newspaper's constant reports and coverage of various mainstream issues reflected shifting interests and attitudes of New York's Chinatown residents to political events in

stressed the continuation of the Roosevelt administration's policy to enforce Sino-American economic cooperation, which was vital for the Chinese American business community. Chinese Nationalist Daily, Sept, 17, 1936, 4; H.J. Chen, "The Chinese Coming in New York", 99

²⁸⁴ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct, 9, 1936

²⁸⁵ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 24, 1936

²⁸⁶ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 30, 1936

²⁸⁷ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Nov.7, 1936

the larger society. The commitment of the Chinese Nationalist Daily and its endorsement of the New York Chinese American Committee of the National Democratic Party contributed to the shift. Their effort to support the Democratic re-election was received with much appreciation by the Democratic Party. To recognize the endeavor of the Chinese American organization, the New York Democrats held a special party for Li Wen on October 29, 1936, honoring this pro-Democratic Chinese community leader for his ardent commitment to Franklin D. Roosevelt's re-election.²⁸⁸

The outcome of the 1936 presidential election was another landslide for President Roosevelt. He won almost 28 million popular votes to Landon's 16 and a half million. The victory once more demonstrated the popularity of FDR and his New Deal. About 1,000 Chinese Americans in New York cast their votes for President Roosevelt.²⁸⁹ It was the genuine effort of the New York Chinese American Committee of the National Democratic Party that brought in so many Chinese American votes for FDR.

A historian has estimated that of those New York Chinese Americans who voted, nearly seventy-five percent cast their ballots in favor of Franklin D. Roosevelt's second-term presidency.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ The party was held when FDR was visiting New York city. Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 29, 1936

²⁸⁹ The Chinese Republic News, Sept. 26 and Nov. 4, 1936

²⁹⁰ H.J. Chen, "The Chinese Coming in New York," 99

Others endorsed the Republican Party in the 1936 national presidential election. Like pro-Democratic New York's Chinese, pro-Republican advocates also organized to encourage Chinatown residents to participate in mainstream politics. They assured eligible voters that there was no need for them to take English test to register, and encouraged those who had lived in New York since 1921 and were 35 years of age to do so.²⁹¹ As a result, "a lot of Chinese Americans registered as Republicans" during the election.²⁹²

As the election was drawing closer, a pro-Republican organization put an advertisement in the Chinese National Daily, urging Chinese Americans to cast their votes for the Republican candidate.²⁹³ There is no record of how many of New York's Chinese voted for the Republican Party in the 1936 national election. But the evidence shows the growing political consciousness of New York's Chinese Americans, both pro-Democratic and pro-Republican in their participation in the election.

Conclusion

The Depression in the 1930's was a severe shock to New York's Chinese Americans. It induced despair and frustration as the

²⁹¹ The Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 9, 1936

²⁹² The Chinese Nationalist Daily, October 9, 1936

²⁹³ Ibid

Depression reinforced racial discrimination. Educated young Chinese Americans found it more difficult for them to integrate into society. However, the hard times also mobilized them to search for solutions.

Understanding that fear and panic would not prepare them for their future life in the United States, New York's Chinese Americans became increasingly interested in American mainstream politics rather than remaining concerned with the politics of their own ethnic community. This growing political interest was demonstrated in their enthusiasm to organize political associations and engage in mainstream political activities.

The burgeoning of such organizations as the Chinese American Citizens Alliance, the New York Chinese American Voting League, and the New York Chinese American Committee of the National Democratic Party was a manifestation of the growing self-consciousness of Chinese Americans as Americans. In their effort to gain the recognition of society at large, these organizations actively participated in important American political campaigns of the 1930's.

The involvement of Chinese Americans in American mainstream politics constituted a movement that moved them towards integration into society. The profound changes in the political behavior of Chinese Americans from disengagement to participation characterized their political consciousness in the 1930's.

CHAPTER V.

WAR AND NEW YORK'S CHINESE COMMUNITY

Previous chapters describe the experiences of the Chinese in New York in the first half century particularly during the Great Depression. As we have seen they organized in many different ways to establish themselves as Americans while reinforcing their identity as Chinese. In this chapter I will discuss their experiences in the war era before Pearl Harbor which shaped their sense of dual nationalities.

The war in China and Europe aroused New York's Chinese. During the war, they participated in various activities to support resistance to imperialist military expansion, particularly Japan's invasion of China. Popular organizations crossing lines of gender, class, and profession were formed in addition to mass protests. These organizations provided financial assistance for civilian relief and military personnel training.

Him Mark Lai, an American-Chinese historian, suggests that pervasive racism and discrimination alienated the Chinese in the United States, thus reinforcing their identification with China. The enthusiastic involvement of Chinese Americans in support of the

Chinese war effort reflected this close relationship.²⁹⁴ Similar to Lai, other scholars, such as Gloria H. Chun and L. Eve Armentrout Ma, also suggest that it was Chinese nationalist zeal that kindled the Chinese Americans' enthusiasm for the war effort. The invasion of China's sovereignty by European powers and Japan from the turn of the century up to World War II, they believe, continually fueled nationalistic feelings and contributed to the war effort among the Chinese in America.²⁹⁵

These explanations are true but inadequate. For example, the notion to defend China as a means of preserving freedom, justice, and humanity for all nations in the world also motivated them. Moreover, Chinese New Yorkers' support of China also demonstrated their desire to change their own social status in American society. Feeling that their humiliating status in American society was a result of their weak national background in the international arena and understanding that as long as China remained subjugated,

²⁹⁴ H.M. Lai, The Chinese of America, 1785-1980 (San Francisco, Chinese Cultural Foundation, 1980); Also see Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, ed., China's Quest for National Identity (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993)

²⁹⁵ Gloria H. Chun, "'Go West ... to China': Chinese American Identity in the 1930's," in Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities During the Exclusion Era, ed. K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Also see L. Eve Armentrout Ma, Revolutionaries, Monarchists and Chinatowns: Chinese politics in the Americas and the 1911 Revolutions (Honolulu, Hawaii UP, 1990); Ronald Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore A History of Asian Americans (New York: Penguin Books, 1989)

prejudice would continue to depress their social and economic standing, the Chinese in the United States committed themselves to a China that would be strong enough to support its people overseas.

In this chapter I argue that Chinese New Yorkers' support of China reflected their dual identity: the desire to maintain their ethnic heritage and also to claim their rights as Americans. Their appeal for American support of China in the war demonstrated this dual identity. I also argue that organizations, particularly women's and students' coalitions, fostered the cohesion of New York's Chinese community. I will explain Chinese American endorsement of other nations in fighting against Japanese and German imperial expansions before the Pearl Harbor attack to show their concern about global peace. I will also discuss other New Yorkers and various national organizations located in New York that supported China.

Chinese New Yorkers' Response to the Japanese invasion of China

First we need to examine both the historical background of relations between China and Japan since the mid-nineteenth century and how the Chinese in the United States related them to their homeland. The Japanese military government had pursued territorial expansion in its foreign policy since the Meiji Restoration. Its victory over China to seize Taiwan and replace Chinese imperial control over the Korean Peninsula in 1895 encouraged Japan to wage

a successful war against Russia in 1905. As a result, Russia ceded its occupied Chinese territories to Japan. The Versailles Treaty of 1917 allowed Japan to take more Chinese territory as a consequence of World War I.

New York's Chinese felt humiliated at China's hopelessness and defenselessness in confronting the violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. They believed that their poor treatment in this country was a reflection of China's weakness in international affairs. Greatly concerned about China's political future and their own social status in the United States, New York's Chinese had offered political and financial support to revitalize and transform China into a modern nation since the late nineteenth century.

This support accelerated when Japan launched a large scale war and occupied a vast area of Chinese territory in the early 1930's. A big demonstration in 1933 reflected this increasing popular support. On October 10, two thousand Chinese New Yorkers, including women and children, participated in this demonstration. More importantly, half of them claimed themselves American citizens. Movements to support a strong China unified and changed the consciousness among Chinese in the United States. Identifying themselves as Chinese Americans, they marched to City Hall, singing

"America" to appeal for American support of China.²⁹⁶

Popular organizations were formed in support of China. The Anti-Japanese Association of Chinese Residents of New York, the All American Anti-Imperialist League, the Chinese Women's Relief Association, the Young Peoples League, the Chinese Student Patriotic Association of Greater New York, the American Bureau for Medical Aid to China, and the Save-China Aviation Association, were among the most vigorous organizations. Their activities ranged from fund-raising through cultural performances and donation collections to military personnel training. Collective efforts to support China helped to build a growing sense of the community's strength, and unified New York's Chinese.

ORGANIZATIONS FOR CHINESE MILITARY DEFENSE

The Anti-Japanese Association of Chinese Residents of New York and the All American Anti-Imperialist League were the early popular alliances established for the purpose of China's defense. Founded in May 1928, the Anti-Japanese Association formed a coalition of

²⁹⁶ According to a Chinese newspaper reporter, a Chinese American Aviation School cadet, whose father had a laundry on Madison Avenue, flew overhead during the demonstration. Arthur Bonner, Alas! What Brought Thee Hither? The Chinese In New York, 1800-1950 (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 173

fifty-six Chinatown organizations in New York.²⁹⁷ Denouncing the Japanese occupation of China, both the Association and the League organized mass demonstrations advocating military actions against the Japanese.²⁹⁸ In addition, they were also active in arranging speeches and forums on war in China.²⁹⁹

Support for China stimulated the Chinese in New York, particularly after the "Shanghai Incident". On January 28, 1932, Japanese troops attacked Shanghai, a major industrial city in China. At the crucial moment of national calamity, the Chinese government refused to fight back. As a consequence, the 5th and 19th Route Army of local troops, who were fighting a bloody war defending Shanghai, were forced to withdraw from Shanghai on March 3 because of military supply shortage. In May, the Chinese government signed an armistice with the Japanese government, permitting the legal station of Japanese troops in Shanghai.

New York's Chinese residents felt indignant at the news. They sharply criticized the non-resistance policy of the Chinese government that had handed over China's territories for an armistice. Holding that China "should not seek an armistice by

²⁹⁷ Chinese Christian Student, June, 1939, 3

²⁹⁸ The Anti-Japanese Association of Chinese Residents of New York was responsible for the May 1928 mass demonstration and the mass gathering to celebrate the victory of the Northeast Army. The Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1938, 3, 5

²⁹⁹ The Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1938, 3

giving away her territory" and "should be militarily well-prepared and use the military force as powerful backing on the peace negotiation table," they urged an immediate military involvement of the Chinese conventional troops against the Japanese occupation.³⁰⁰ In support of military campaigns against the Japanese, Chinese New Yorkers donated fifty thousand helmets to the 19th Route Army. Their generous contributions received acknowledgement from the local troops. On August 30, General Jiang Guangding and Tsia Tingkai of the 19th Route Army sent a telegraph to express their gratitude for the support of Chinese in New York.³⁰¹

To advocate China's military resistance against the Japanese invasions, more organizations were established among New York's Chinese. The Chinese Patriotic Association in New York (CPA), the Save-China Aviation Association (SCAA), and the Anti-Japanese Association of Overseas Chinese (AJAOC) were some of the important organizations established to support China. The formation of these organizations demonstrated the increasing anti-Japanese sentiments among Chinese New Yorkers and a growing consciousness of the unification of Chinese Americans. They launched fund-raising activities, sponsored military personnel training and encouraged young Chinese Americans to go to China to fight the Japanese as part of their commitment to support China.

³⁰⁰ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Sept. 1, 1932

³⁰¹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Aug. 30, 1932

In August 1932, the CPA in New York announced that it would raise two hundred thousand dollars to train pilots and ground crew from among the Chinese in the United States. The AJAOC declared that it would sponsor a military training institution, the Overseas Chinese Aviation School, to work on military training drills. With thirty military veterans as members, the SCAA decided to focus its training program on badly needed aviation personnel and technicians in China.³⁰²

The SCAA was a coalition of several Chinese American organizations which included the New York Chinese American Aviation Volunteers and the East Coast General Committee of Overseas Chinese Aviators. With its headquarters in the Chinese School in New York's Chinatown, these organizations made a joint effort to support China's defense. On August 18, 1932, the SCAA held its founding ceremony. Chinese and American flags were hung on each side of the conference hall to demonstrate the solidarity of Chinese Americans in support of Chinese war. Chen Kueiwu, the president of the Association, delivered an opening speech. Stressing that "the most crucial task" for China was to drive the Japanese out the country and to regain Chinese territories, Chen announced the determination of the Chinese American coalition to support China's cause.³⁰³

³⁰² Chinese Nationalist Daily, Aug. 18, 1932

³⁰³ Ibid

The SCAA opposed Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) for his non-resistance policy to the Japanese invasion. A resolution reached at the end of the ceremony criticized Chiang for a weak China, "not a country of sovereignty," where the people were "suffering from the plundering wars among imperialist nations." It called for a joint action of Chinese Americans to support a strong China in her military resistance:

It is the time for the Chinese people to combat against imperialist plundering. All unequal treaties must be abolished. All imperialist nations must be driven out.... [As Chinese descendants] we are aware of the need of China. We decide to take the responsibility to help in all ways we can since Chiang Kaishek (Jiang Jieshi) held non-resistance policy.³⁰⁴

To emphasize the principle of its military support of China, a weapon display was held at the ceremony. A local Chinese newspaper reported that participants were "in high patriotic spirit."³⁰⁵ Many expressed their willingness to join the military training programs. Others wished that they had a chance to go to China to combat the Japanese directly.³⁰⁶ In aiding China's defense, this organization also decided to issue aviation newsletters to inform the public.³⁰⁷ A few days after the ceremony, the Association

³⁰⁴ Ibid

³⁰⁵ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Aug. 11, 1932

³⁰⁶ Ibid

³⁰⁷ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Aug. 22, 1932

formally publicized its announcement for recruits. On August 22, a special committee was assigned to raise funds for the purchase of an aircraft for field training.³⁰⁸

In the years of supporting Chinese military defense, the SCAA sent its military mission representatives to China. Huang Jinci was the first to be sent to Lo Yang Chinese Aviation School in central China to set up an aviation training program in 1935. Holding an American pilot's license, Huang was considered an excellent and experienced pilot with a good command of both "piloting and engineering."³⁰⁹ Xie Zuguang, Kong Mingguong and Situ Yiping were also sent to China after they graduated from the aviation training program. These young Chinese Americans were New York University graduates. Committed to the cause of Chinese defense, they decided to go to China to fight the Japanese, leaving their professional expectations behind.³¹⁰

The SCAA also stressed the importance of a unified China to mount a strong defense. It condemned the warlords' wars for a divided China and denounced sheer partisanship for the weakened country. Calling for the cease-fire of warlords' wars and the truce of civil wars among political parties in China, it appealed for preserving a unified China to protect the country from foreign

³⁰⁸ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Aug. 22, 1932

³⁰⁹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, June 9, 1935

³¹⁰ Chinese Nationalist Daily, June 10, 1935

intrusion.³¹¹ On the 1932 "Humiliation Day", Chen Kueiwu, the president of the SCAA, called for a unified China to fight off invasion, maintaining that different parties and factions should share the common goal of fighting together with the masses to raise the morale of all military personnel and regain the lost Chinese territories.³¹²

The Chinese in the United States felt as humiliated as their Chinese compatriots at the defeat of China. In China, literary and music works reflected the sorrow, frustration and fury of those who lost their land and home. In the United States, Chinese Americans set September 18, the day when the Japanese launched a war to take territories in the northeast, as "Humiliation Day", to commemorate those who had lost their homeland and those who had been killed in the war. In New York, the Chinese held an annual mass rally every year to commemorate "Humiliation Day." These feelings stimulated New York's Chinese and brought them together. In addition to the organizations for Chinese military defense, women and students also organized to support a unified China.

³¹¹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Sept. 21, 1932

³¹² Chinese Nationalist Daily, Sep. 21, 1932
Most Chinese Americans remained neutral in the dispute between the National Party and the Chinese Communist Party in China. Instead of taking sides with either party, they appealed for military defense, national unity and an united front for China.

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS FOR CHINESE CIVILIAN RELIEF

During the years when China was being plundered by the Japanese invaders, New York's Chinese women, in particular, organized and contributed to relief work for Chinese civilians, assuming a role that was unusual for them in public activities. In addition to participating in mass demonstrations, women also arranged benefit parties and auctions to raise money to support Chinese relief. The Chinese Young Women's Patriotic League (CYWPL) and the Chinese Women's Relief Association (CWRA) were such women's organizations.

Established in 1932, the CWRA provided financial aid for Chinese civilian relief during the Shanghai defense war.³¹³ In February 1932, the League organized its first fund-raising parade. With a Chinese national flag held by four girls at each corner in the lead to show their support of China, women demonstrators marched through New York's Chinatown. Sympathetic spectators along the streets quietly donated coins and dollar bills, some wrapped in red paper, to support the women's effort to help the refugees of Shanghai. Appealing for public support of China, New York's Chinese women also called on Chinese Americans to boycott Japanese goods.³¹⁴

³¹³ The Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1938. Deng Zuyin was the first president of the organization.

³¹⁴ Ibid

The Chinese American women's effort to support Chinese relief work received ardent support from the Chinese community at large in New York. In March 1932, when the CYWPL held an auction bazaar to raise funds for the relief work, the Chinese School in Chinatown provided the room and space. Merchants donated precious Ming vases and old brocades to assist the fund-raising. During the eight-day auction bazaar, the CYWPL, according to Bonner, raised a large amount of money for Shanghai by selling the items donated by the Chinese community.³¹⁵ The CYWPL received even more support in the following year. On one occasion, as many as 600 Chinese New Yorkers contributed at its fund-raising benefit party.³¹⁶

The women's effort to support China continued when Japanese accelerated its war in 1937. They participated more in mass demonstrations and organized more fund-raising activities. On July 7, 1937, Japanese military forces secretly attacked Beijing, marking the onset of wholesale Sino-Japanese war. The war spread quickly. Japanese troops moved southward after the fall of Beijing, occupying, within a few months, the large cities of Tianjin, Shanghai, and Nanjing, spreading terror with a policy of "burn all, kill all, loot all." In October 1937, Pearl S. Buck, an

³¹⁵ Arthur Bonner, Alas! What Brought Thee Hither? The Chinese In New York, 1800-1950 (Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1996), 173

³¹⁶ The Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 10, 1933. In the event, Deng Zuyin, the president of the organization, and Kuan Bingxi appealed for more support for Chinese relief work.

American journalist, reported from China that in the wake of the Japanese invasion,

Thousands of innocent people [were] dead, peaceful villages [were] destroyed, women and children [were] killed, ... cities of the world [were] ruined, ... prisoners [were] tortured.³¹⁷

"This ... war in China," she wrote, was one of "utter disregard for individual human life," a "mechanical means of death, the ultimate of terror."³¹⁸

Reports of Japanese cruelty shocked the world as well as the people of the United States. Most importantly, they focused the hatred of overseas Chinese against the Japanese while strengthening the sympathies of the Chinese to their homeland. "People were talking mostly about China's war with Japan at the dinner table after a long day of work," Paul Siu recalled.³¹⁹ When friends got together in restaurants in Chinatown on Sundays, they also talked about the war.³²⁰

The CYWPL accelerated its support for China. Joined by other community members, its activities spread across lines of gender,

³¹⁷ Pearl S. Buck, "Western Weapons in the Hands of the Reckless East," Asia, Oct. 1937, 672

³¹⁸ Ibid; For the cruelty of Japanese war against China, see Iris Chang, The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II (L.L.C. Basic Books, 1997)

³¹⁹ Paul Siu, The Chinese Laundryman: A Study of Social Isolation (1953), 139

³²⁰ Ibid

class, and age. In October 1937, the CYWPL members led a mass parade in New York's Chinese community protesting against the Japanese invasion of China. A month later, in another mass demonstration, two thousand Chinese American women and men marched through New York's Chinatown. Carrying a banner of dollar bills sewn into the Chinese characters for their slogan of "Fight Against Japan to the Bitter End to Save China," they called for more financial contributions while expressing their determination to support the Chinese to the end of war. The CYWPL also continued its activities raising money for Chinese war victims and refugees. Its one-week fund-raising drive held in the Chinese School in New York's Chinatown included amateur opera productions as well as a week-long bazaar.³²¹

The Chinese Women's Relief Association (CWRA) also contributed greatly to the support of China. While the CYWPL was a Chinatown-based women's organization, with most of its members American-born and living in New York's Chinatown, the CWRA was an upper class women's organization. Many of its members were former Chinese students sent by the Chinese government to the United States to study. Situated at 5 East 57th Street, the CWRA was established in late September 1937 to raise money specially for Chinese war relief. Within a few months, it became a moderately large relief work institution with over fifty members and raised "a good amount

³²¹ Bonner, Alas! What Brought Thee Hither? (1997), 173

of money" among upper class Chinese Americans.³²²

Its symposium on Chinese issues held at the Colony Club in November 1937 and its benefit reception at the Park Lane Hotel on December 5, according to a local Chinese American newsletter, were "very successful financially".³²³ In less than five months since September 1937, the Association raised a sum of 60,000 Chinese dollars for Chinese relief.³²⁴ Shortly after the transfer of the money to China, an installment of 30,000 dollars in Chinese currency was collected and reported to be "almost ready for transmission" within a few months.³²⁵

The anti-Japanese War in the 1930's created the momentum for

³²² The Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1938

³²³ Ibid

³²⁴ The money was sent directly to Madame Chiang Kaishek (Jiang Jieshi). In order to set up a direct aid relation with China, this organization asked Madame Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) to be its honorary president. According to The Chinese Christian Student C.H. Wang was the first president of the Chinese Women's Relief Association, while K.C. L. was selected as its vice-president. Ibid

The non-resistance policy of Chiang Kai-shek toward the Japanese invasions received fierce criticism in China as well as among the Chinese in the United States. General Young Hucheng and Zhang Xueliang rebelled and arrest Chiang in Xian in June 1936. The crisis was eased when Chiang promised to take military actions against the Japanese. He was eventually released and resumed his title as a Commander in Chief as a consequence of series negotiations in which Madam Chiang was also involved. The Chinese women's association believed that it was the best way to send the money directly to her as it trusted Madam Chiang.

³²⁵ The Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1938

New York's Chinese women to take on public responsibilities. For the first time in history, they formed their own organizations to translate their humanitarian impulses into action. Their efforts to participate in the public gatherings, bazaars, and benefit parties for donations heightened their feelings of initiative. These activities also gave them a sense of purpose and achievement. Supported by other members of the Chinese community, New York's Chinese women and their organizations contributed greatly to Chinese relief work. In less than six months after Japan launched a wholesale war against China, a total \$1,800,000 was collected in New York alone in 1937 through individual donations, business and community associations, and organized fund-raising.³²⁶

STUDENTS' ORGANIZATIONS IN SUPPORT OF CHINA

The Japanese invasion of China also united Chinese students in New York, who joined New York's Chinese in opposition activities. While they had once considered themselves as elites, these activities helped Chinese students change their consciousness and attitude towards other Chinese. Their involvement in support of China also received the recognition of those in China.

Chinese students in New York were small in numbers. There were only 280 Chinese students studying in twenty-seven colleges in

³²⁶ The Far Eastern Magazine, Vol.1, No.2, Dec. 1937, 66

1937.³²⁷ American college registrar records included both American-born Chinese students and students from China in the "Chinese" category.³²⁸ In practice, the two groups of students had their separate organizations on campus which served their respective purposes. American-born Chinese were more concerned about their civil rights as American citizens, while students from China expected to go back. They focused more on the contributions they were able to make to China as a result of their training.

The Japanese invasion of China, however, brought both groups together. Various coalitions for the defense of China were established on and off campus among Chinese students regardless of place of birth or national identity. These student organizations committed themselves to the preservation of an independent China with its sovereignty and territorial integrity. They opposed the non-resistance policy of the Chinese government. If the Chinese government "ignore[d] the will of the Chinese people," they announced, the students in the United States would "not recognize the government as representative of the nation." They appealed for resistance:

We, the Chinese students in New York ... do

³²⁷ Directory of Chinese Students in America (Liou Mei Qing Nian), (New York: Chinese Student Christian Association in North America, 1937); Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1937, No.4

³²⁸ Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1937, No.4

solemnly pledge ourselves to exert our united strength for the resistance, ...for the preservation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of China."³²⁹

Their early joint action to form a picket line in front of the Japanese Consulate demonstrated the unity of Chinese students. In September 1937, one hundred Chinese students, organized by the Chinese Student Patriotic Association of Greater New York (CSPA), formed a picket line in front of the Japanese Consulate on Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street in New York to protest the Japanese military attack on China. Waving placards emblazoned with slogans of "Stopping the Killings" and "Down with the Japanese Imperialism," the students demanded immediate withdrawal of Japanese troops from China.³³⁰

The CSPA was an important Chinese student organization to support China. Other organizations such as the Chinese Students League of Greater New York (CSL) and the Chinese Student Christian Association (CSCA) also played an active role. In addition to demonstrations, they organized cultural activities and street collections to raise money needed in China.

Street collection was not a social convention of Chinese students. Culturally, Chinese students considered themselves

³²⁹ The Chinese Christian Student, Feb.- March 1936, 15

³³⁰ The Chinese Christian Student, Oct. 1937; The Chinese Digest, Sept. 1937

elites. Standing and collecting money in the streets would embarrass them as they saw it similar to street begging. National humiliation put down their individual embarrassment and changed their attitude. Shared experiences as Chinese in the United States also brought students and other New Yorkers together. On December 27, 1937, New York's Chinese students responded enthusiastically to the appeal for a cooperative street drive initiated by the American Medical Aid to China. An estimated \$4,500 was raised by participating students on a four-day drive from December 27 to 31 in 1937 and a two-day drive from January 3 to 4 in 1938.³³¹

These successful street drives encouraged Chinese students. Bliss Kao, a Chinese student at Columbia University, told a newspaper reporter that,

It was our first time in such a role in an American city. We felt little timid, even embarrassed,... but we soon got used to the

³³¹ The American Bureau for Medical Aid to China was a Chinese American medical organization. Located at 40 East 34th Street in New York, it was formed in December 1937 by a group of prominent medicine professionals with Dr. Co Tui as its chairman and Dr. Farn B. Chu as its vice chairman. This organization raised a considerable sum of money, which enabled it to purchase medical equipment and supplies for China.

The badly needed medical supplies were shipped to Hong Kong, the then-British colony, and reshipped to mainland China where thousands of "stricken civilian men, women and children were waiting "for a merciful chance for life." The effort of New York's Chinese medical professionals to provide aid for China elicited a wholehearted response from the Chinese community, which was eager to save as many of the lives of the wounded as possible. The Far Eastern Magazine, Nov. 1937-June 1938, 138-140

situation and began to appeal either verbally or by shaking our containers, which began to full up and growing heavy.³³²

Again, in January 1938, over one hundred of New York's Chinese students took part in a seven-day street drive sponsored by the American Bureau for Medical Aid to China to raise funds for China's relief work. Standing in the cold January weather, holding badges, containers and placards for donations in the busy sections of Time Square, Grand Central, 34th Street, and Wall Street, they achieved more. By the end of the seven-day campaign, \$4,444.09 had been raised by the Chinese students in Times Square alone.³³³

In addition to participating in fund-raising campaigns organized by Chinese community organizations, students also successfully organized their own campaigns. In a four-day street drive organized by the CSL in Manhattan from October 6 to 10, 1938, students collected a large sum of money that enabled them to purchase three ambulances needed in China. In another street drive, this student body raised \$3,377.92.³³⁴

The successful fund-raising street drives were the result of

³³² Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1938, 5

³³³ The \$4,444.09 helped the organization purchase six "well-equipped medical and surgical machines" needed in China. Chinese Christian Student, February, 1938, 5

³³⁴ It lasted from February 19 to 24, 1939. The Chinese Student League of Greater New York, May 1939, 46

the consolidated effort of New York's Chinese community. Many Chinese restaurant owners, merchants, as well as ordinary workers were involved. Downtown Chinese restaurants near Wall Street offered the students places to rest, and provided free meals for them.³³⁵ "Canton Village", a Chinese restaurant in midtown Manhattan, served as the campaign headquarters with its convenient location at 49th Street and Broadway.³³⁶

New York Chinese students' effort to support China's defense inspired those in other areas of the United States. Students in Boston, Iowa, and Chicago were also involved in similar activities.³³⁷

The ardent support of Chinese students for a strong China received the recognition of the Chinese people. On May 3, 1939, Madam Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) wrote a letter to the Chinese Christian Students' Association in New York to express her appreciation to Chinese students in the United States for their "splendid response" and contributions to the Chinese resistance war.³³⁸

³³⁵ Ibid

³³⁶ When they had a break, according to a local Chinese newsletter, the "shivering Chinese students" came into the restaurant to warm themselves "with a cup of hot tea." Over the tea, they exchanged notes and interesting experiences. Ibid

³³⁷ Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1939, 3

³³⁸ See the second part of note 321 for information on the change of the Chinese government policy.

Such splendid response has been made by our compatriots overseas that we lose no opportunity to thank them and express appreciation of their patriotism and helpfulness. Our country is determined to continue the resistance. ...We have now been fighting for 22 months.... The Japanese bomb us, but while bombing does terrible destruction to human bodies and property, it will not win the war.... We can survive and...beat our enemy with the help of our overseas countrymen.³³⁹

The movement to support a war of resistance against the Japanese invasions contributed to the cohesiveness of the Chinese community in New York. For example, the establishment of the China Aid Information Exchange, which included more than twenty organizations, demonstrated the unity and cooperation among New York Chinese. The Chinese Women's Relief Association, the Chinese Students' League, the Chinese Students' Christian Association, the Federal Council of Churches, and the Committee for Boycott And Against Japanese Aggression were members of the association.³⁴⁰

Such a coordinating agency, a local Chinese newsletter commented, "filled a long felt need among the scores of

³³⁹ Chinese Christian Student, June, 1939, 3

³⁴⁰ They met at the Hotel Lexington in New York on April 21, 1938. Delegates from the American Red Cross and the Associated Boards of Christian Colleges in China also participated in the meeting. Chinese Christian Student, May-June, 1938, 10

organizations which have sprung up to aid relief in China."³⁴¹ David Tong, president of the Chinese Students' Christian Association, praised the profound unity of the Chinese community and the "Golden Doctrine of Cooperation" developed among New York's Chinese residents. He contended that members of the Chinese community had "become champions of unity and cooperation" in the cause to support China."³⁴²

Americans' Support For Chinese New Yorkers

Chinese Americans' enthusiastic support of China during the Japanese invasions brought important acknowledgement from the American society at large. By the end of 1930's, a different attitude in American society showed a respect to Chinese Americans. Ordinary New Yorkers demonstrated their sympathy and support for students' street collections for the Chinese defense cause. Politicians also publicly endorsed their efforts. Mass demonstrations were held to protest Japanese cruelty as well. Clearly, the Japanese invasion of China and Chinese American support of China's defense brought coalitions between Chinese New Yorkers and other Americans.

Americans were outraged by the Japanese invasions. In their sympathetic support for the Chinese, even the poorest New Yorkers

³⁴¹ Ibid

³⁴² Chinese Christian Student, Nev. 1938

contributed whatever they could to help. "We're all for you," one New Yorker told a Chinese student after he put a coin in a can in street drive. "Good Luck to You" was a common wish from New York's residents. On one occasion, a "shabbily-dressed" man said to a student, "I wish I could give more" when he took out some pennies. Another man explained that he was skipping a meal when he gave a nickel to a student.³⁴³ A correspondent of the Chinese Christian Student reported a "remarkable thing" that happened during their street campaigns: "the people who actually put money into the cans belonged to the lower classes." Their "kind hearts" and their "intelligent words" demonstrated that they were the most supportive people. Suffering from hard times during the Depression, their selfless contributions for the desperate in China moved Chinese students the most.³⁴⁴

Many donors were "push-cart vendors," "kind-hearted cops," and taxi drivers, according to a Chinese student newsletter. A Japanese man also contributed to the campaign when he passed the students. Some unusual items, including rings and an overcoat, were donated by unknown New Yorkers. An American veteran gave a bullet to a student saying that he hoped it would "help fight the Japs". Some New Yorkers found other ways to contribute to the fund drive. A "kind old man" offered a female student a cup of hot

³⁴³ Chinese Christian Student, February, 1938, 5

³⁴⁴ Ibid

chocolate, which was "much-needed in the cold weather."³⁴⁵

The fund-raising campaigns for China's defense also received sympathetic and encouraging support from New York City's government. The city's Department of Public Welfare issued the organizers a special license permitting them to carry on their street collections in four of New York's busiest districts.

Big demonstrations were organized in New York, as well. On October 1, 1937, ten thousand New Yorkers -- a broad coalition of Chinese New Yorkers and other New York residents -- gathered at Madison Square Garden protesting the Japanese occupation of China. Condemning the ruthlessness of the Japanese troops in China, the rally urged a boycott of Japanese goods in America. Rev. Harry F. Ward, Professor of Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary and Chairman of the American League Against War and Fascism, presided over the rally.³⁴⁶

Fifty-one prominent labor, civic and religious leaders participated in the rally. Joseph Curran, general organizer of the National Maritime Union, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam spoke at the rally.³⁴⁷ Professor John L. Childs of

³⁴⁵ Ibid

³⁴⁶ The League Against War and Fascism and the American Friends of the Chinese People were major organizers of the rally. Chinese Christian Student, Oct. 1937

³⁴⁷ Bonner, Alas! What Brought Thee Hither? The Chinese in New York 1800-1950, 173

Teachers College at Columbia University, Philip Jaffe, managing editor of Amerasia, Dr. Cho-ting Chi, a noted lecturer and writer, Robert N. Baldwin, director of Civil Liberties Union, D. Willard Lyon, former national secretary of the Y.M.C.A. in China, and William E. Dodds, American Ambassador to Germany, were among the prominent participants.³⁴⁸

Dr. Tsune-chi Yu, Consul General of the Chinese Republic, was invited as a special guest to address the rally. Expressing his gratitude for the American people's support on behalf of China, Yu told his audience that "never before had the Chinese people had American sympathy and friendship so much as now." "Chinese did not want one drop of American blood spilled in defense of China," Yu announced, "All that we ask is China's territorial and administrative integrity." Appealing for human justice, Yu urged an American action against the Japanese, particularly an American arms embargo.³⁴⁹

Luise Raner, the star of the film "The Good Earth," also spoke at the rally. "As a human being and as an artist," she announced, "I protest what the Japanese are doing in China."³⁵⁰ The rally reached its peak when a Chinatown orchestra and the Chinese Boy Scouts performed. The audience was moved by songs such as "In

³⁴⁸ Chinese Christian Student, Oct. 1937, 7

³⁴⁹ Ibid

³⁵⁰ Ibid

Defense of Peace" and "From the Blood Soaked Earth," and many of them joined in the singing to express their sympathetic feelings for the Chinese in China.

A five-point resolution was reached by the end of the rally. Protesting the Japanese occupation in China, it called on all American citizens to take actions to

stop buying Japanese goods; support organized labor in refusing to handle shipments to and from Japan of any war material; embargo on all materials for Japan; demand that China be permitted to buy here anything she needs under conditions that will not involve the United States in war; demand that the United States fulfil her international obligation by proclaiming Japan a violator of the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the Nine Power Treaty.³⁵¹

In order to convey the sentiments of the rally, the Resolution was telegraphed to President Roosevelt, to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and to C.T. Wang, the Chinese Ambassador. An estimated \$3,500 in cash was collected during the rally. Like the Chinese American women's organizations, this money was also sent directly to Madam Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) as well as to Madam Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan). The rally generated so much excitement that members of audience voluntarily pledged \$1,600.³⁵²

On May 9, 1938, more than twelve thousand Chinese from New

³⁵¹ Ibid

³⁵² Ibid

York and other eastern cities of Newark, Jersey City, Boston and Philadelphia came together for an unprecedented parade in New York City. Significantly, sympathetic New Yorkers also joined in the march. Volunteer American bands, such as the "Negro Band" from the Eureka Lodge of the Grand Order of Odd Fellows, the Bay Ridge Boys' Club of Brooklyn Band, and a woman's band from the Dern Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars were ardent supporters of the event.³⁵³ Though no appeal was made for funds, according to a local Chinese newsletter, spectators along the streets "began showering nickels and dimes and even dollars bills" as the parade passed by. About six hundred dollars had been collected by the end of the demonstration against the Japanese.³⁵⁴

Inspired by the spirit of the rally, more joint activities were organized in New York. On December 10, 1938, the American Friends of the Chinese People organized a big parade in support of the movement to boycott Japanese goods. On December 13, 1938, the Chinese Aid Association also held a rally in support of China's defense.³⁵⁵

³⁵³ The parade was considered "the biggest mass demonstration ever staged by Chinese in Eastern United States." "Great Chinese Parade In Eastern United States," The Chinese Christian Student, May-June, 1938. This event was also reported by the New York Times and the Far Eastern Magazine under the title "12,000 Chinese in Protest Parade."

³⁵⁴ The Chinese Christian Student, May-June, 1938

³⁵⁵ Chinese Student League of Greater New York, May, 1939

Mass rallies were held simultaneously in Washington D.C., Pittsburgh, and Boston, demanding similar boycott actions.³⁵⁶ Thus, the movement for Chinese defense was no longer simply the business of Chinese Americans. It spread from New York to other eastern cities, obtaining ardent support from the society at large.

The government of New York also endorsed the people's protest against Japanese occupation in China. Mayor Fiorello La Guardia openly supported the anti-Japanese movement. "We wish to raise our voices in world wide protest against ruthless bombing of open towns." He said, "We extend our fullest sympathy and join in your protest and pledge support to all efforts to halt these brutalities before they overwhelm us all."³⁵⁷

New York City became a center of national China relief organizations. The China Emergency Civilian Relief Organization, the China Famine Relief U. S. A. Inc., the Associated Boards for Christian Colleges, and the Harmon Foundation were among the important institutions to collect money in support of China's relief.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ Chinese Christian Student, Oct. 1937, 7

³⁵⁷ Chinese Student League of Greater New York, May, 1939

³⁵⁸ Organizations to aid Chinese relief work were also formed on the West Coast. The China War Relief Association was one of the biggest China relief organizations in the west coast of the United States. Consisting of 91 overseas Chinese organizations, this organization was established on August 19, 1937, one month after the Japanese attacked Beijing. For the purpose of raising money for civilian refugee relief and medical relief for the

The China Emergency Civilian Relief Organization was created to cooperate with the American Red Cross to provide emergency relief supplies for war victims in China. With Theodore Roosevelt Jr. as its chairman, the organization was headquartered at 40 Wall Street in New York.³⁵⁹ During the years when the Chinese were suffering from wars, the China Emergency Civilian Relief Organizations raised funds to provide war victims with financial aid. In February 1938, it conducted a big campaign to collect donations in New York; sympathetic residents contributed greatly.³⁶⁰

The China Famine Relief U. S. A. Inc. was another relief organization in New York. Located at 105 East 22nd Street, this organization was under the leadership of its treasurer, Mr. James M. Speers, and its executive director, Mr. J. A. Thomas. Funds raised by this organization were distributed in part under the

wounded soldiers in China, the China War Relief Association had raised over three million Chinese dollars by early February, 1938. In addition, fifteen thousand pieces of new clothing had been sent to the wounded soldiers, and fifty thousand pounds of old clothes had been sent to the war refugees in Shanghai and Canton. According to a local Chinese newsletter, thirty thousand individuals contributed to the fund raising. Three percent of these donors were American friends. They were all volunteers. See "Active China Relief Organizations in America" The Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1938

³⁵⁹ Lyman Pierce and H.B.R. Bugess were the executives of this organization. The Chinese Christian Student, February, 1938

³⁶⁰ The Chinese Christian Student, February, 1938

auspices of the International Red Cross at Shanghai. In a short period of a few months in 1938, it raised \$60,000 for Chinese civilians in need of food, shelter, clothing and medical assistance.³⁶¹

Religious organizations, as well, participated in the secular efforts of the larger society to support Chinese defense and to aid Chinese civilian relief work. The Associated Boards for Christian Colleges was one of such institutions. With its general office in Room 903 at 150 Fifth Avenue in New York, and with Mr. B.A. Garside as its general secretary and George W. Davison as its treasurer, this organization consisted of twelve Christian universities in China supported by twenty-one mission boards in the United States, Great Britain, and Canada.³⁶² As early as 1937, when Japanese attacked Beijing, this organization undertook a task to raise an emergency fund of \$300,000 to assist colleges in meeting emergency expenses created by the war in China. On October 10, 1937, it organized a big forum on China issues in New York. Dr. Philip S. Chen, a professor of Chemistry at Madison College, spoke on Sino-Japanese relations. His speech aroused the audience. On December 7, 1937, this organization launched a fund raising campaign in New York. Sympathetic New Yorkers participated.³⁶³

³⁶¹ The Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1938

³⁶² The Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1938

³⁶³ The Chinese Christian Student, Dec. 1937

The Harmon Foundation was an example of yet another type of organization supporting China's defense. The Harmon Foundation was one of the first American organizations to report on anti-Japanese war in Chinese Communist controlled regions. Motion pictures of the Eight Route Army in action, made by Frances Roots, were shown at its headquarters in New York.³⁶⁴ During the war, it constantly sent motion pictures filmed in China to the United States. In the middle of 1938, Logan Roots, a member of the Foundation, was reportedly on his way home to the United States from Hankow. He brought with him footage to be screened at the Harmon Foundation."³⁶⁵

American organizations and their activities to support China and to endorse Chinese American efforts for China's defense demonstrated both shifting attitudes in American society towards Chinese Americans and American concern about justice and freedom in the troubling world. While the United States remained neutral, New York was departing from neutrality. Another example of this departure was Representative Francis I. Culkin's proposal that New York ensure adequate financial support for Chinese relief. He introduced a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives to appropriate \$5,000,000 for the relief of the destitute and homeless

³⁶⁴ Frances Roots was a daughter of Bishop Logan Roots. Chinese Christian Student, May-June, 1938

³⁶⁵ Chinese Christian Student, May-June, 1938

Chinese in the war zone to increase President Roosevelt's proposal urging American citizens to give \$1,000,000 for those suffering in China.³⁶⁶

New York Chinese's Response to the Global Crisis

World War II involved countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe that left over sixty million soldiers and civilians dead from bombings, disease, starvation, and genocidal campaigns of extermination. The horrors of the Holocaust and the Rape of Nanjing left a deep scar upon the mind of humanity.

Historians believe that the outbreak of the war had its roots in World War I and in the peace terms of Versailles for leaving territorial issues unresolved. Scholars also contend that the global conflict was a consequence of the uncontrolled expansion of imperialism, nationalism, fascism, and militarism.³⁶⁷

World War II cut a gash across the surface of American

³⁶⁶ Siuwein Yu, "American Good-will to China", Far Eastern Magazine, Vol.1 No.4, Feb. 1938, 195

³⁶⁷ Gerald Feldman, ed, German Imperialism, 1914-1918 (New York: Wiley, 1972) and Andreas Hillgruber, German and the Two World Wars (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1981) approach the debate over Germany's guilt and aggression. W.G. Beasley, Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945 (1987) is a good book on Japanese expansion. Akira Iriye, The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific (London and New York: Longman, 1987) covers the race to war. Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996) is a recent interpretation with a good discussion of war and revolution.

history. Faced with an unstable world during the decades of the twenties and thirties, the United States turned away from international collective action for peace. In rejecting League of Nations membership, Americans deliberately declined to involve themselves in world affairs. In 1935, Congress passed the Neutrality Act. In the next two years, Congress upheld the renewed neutrality legislation of 1936 and 1937, insisting on "protection of neutral rights" for Americans.

New York's Chinese opposed the American neutrality policy in foreign affairs, particular its policy towards China, warning that the failure of American intervention would lead to more Japanese aggression.³⁶⁸ They challenged the policy by participating in activities to support China against Japan's invasion. Their rhetoric was not merely nationalistic. More than that, their support of China's defense had a strong internationalist aspect. The declaration of a Chinese American organization revealed Chinese New Yorkers' concern about global peace. Announcing its support of China "in the name of human justice" and for "the cause of international justice and peace," New York's Chinese defined their activities as defending "the most sacred rights of humanity."³⁶⁹

The desire of New York's Chinese for world peace was also demonstrated as they joined other ethnic groups to oppose fascism

³⁶⁸ Chinese Christian Student, December 10, 1935

³⁶⁹ Chinese Christian Student, Vol. XXVI, No.3, Jan. 1936, 7

and the expansion of German and Italian military occupations in Europe.

NEW YORK CHINESE'S SUPPORT OF OTHER RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS

Throughout the 1930's, the Great Depression concentrated the attention of New York's Chinese on domestic economic issues. But events in the world also engaged them. In 1935, Mussolini launched his long-anticipated attack on Ethiopia in Africa, Franco revolted in 1936 against the existing republican government in Spain, and the Japanese assaulted on Beijing in 1937. Chinese New Yorkers participated in protests with other ethnic groups in New York against imperialist expansion.

European ethnic immigrant groups in New York opposed the spread of fascism. As Hitler's army overran Poland in September 1939, an estimated one hundred thousand Polish Americans in New York protested against the Nazi conquest of Poland.³⁷⁰ The Czechs in New York also openly expressed their opposition to Nazi Germany. They enthusiastically supported their people's military resistance when Nazi Germany invaded the Czechs' homeland.³⁷¹ New York Jews

³⁷⁰ Joseph A. Wytrawal, Poles in America History and Tradition, (Detroit: Endurance Press, 1969), 386-87; Frederick M. Binder, All the Nations Under Heaven: An Ethnic and Racial History of New York City (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 191

³⁷¹ Frederick M. Binder, All the Nations Under Heaven: An Ethnic and Racial History of New York City (New York, Columbia University Press, 1995), 191

initiated civilian drives and activities to protest the mass persecutions of the Holocaust. They held several rallies at Madison Square Garden, calling for aid to their people in escaping European death camps.³⁷²

New York's Chinese showed much concern about the war in Europe. As early as 1936, when Fascists launched a civil war in Spain, Chinese American volunteers in New York cooperated in campaigns to support the republic. They participated in fund raising activities for the relief of refugees. The American Student Union was established to meet the needs of Spanish civilians, especially students.³⁷³ The All American Anti-Imperialist League, another Chinese American organization was also formed especially for the purpose of supporting anti-imperialist movements of other ethnic groups. On October 10, 1938, the League organized a big demonstration. Two thousand of New York's Chinese

³⁷² However, these activities had little impact upon federal government policies. For more information, see Richard Lingerman, Don't You Know There Is a War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945, (New York, 1970), 331; and David Wyman, The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); Frederick Binder and David Reimers, All the Nations Under Heaven (New York: Columbia UP.), 192-193

³⁷³ Its headquarters was situated at 112 West 19th Street. It was originally founded with special emphasis on the needs in Spain as Spain was undergoing a bloody civil war. Cooperating with International Student Service in its Chinese university relief fund, certain chapters of this organization also designated to contribute funds to China war relief. See Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1938

residents participated in this event denouncing the German occupation of Poland. Dr. Frank Lee, China's ambassador to Poland, was invited to speak on the situation in Poland.³⁷⁴

Informal forums on wars in Europe were also held in Chinatown to demonstrate Chinese New Yorkers' interest in the global crisis. On an occasion, five hundred Chinatown residents gathered at the corner of Mott and Pell Streets to discuss political events in Europe. The discussions were so intensive that, according to a Chinese American newsletter, no participants felt the heat of the scorching sun.³⁷⁵

The anti-Axis activities of various immigrant groups forged a movement that created a new climate committing the country toward intervention in world affairs. The active participation of New York's Chinese residents in the movement demonstrated their opposition to the world-wide imperialist expansions and their stance for freedom and justice.

NEW YORK'S CHINESE ADVOCATES FOR AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN WAR

Joining the growing voices of those opposing the spread of fascism, New York's Chinese also openly challenged the American neutrality policy in foreign affairs. Calling it the American

³⁷⁴ Frank Lee was a son of Tom Lee who was a Chinese community leader. The Chinese Christian Student, Feb. 1938, 3.

³⁷⁵ Ibid

diplomatic policy of repudiating American international responsibility, they appealed for American involvement in the war. More significantly, they continued their support of China and considered their endorsement to be the Americans' obligation in world affairs. Thus, once again, they reinforced their dual identity as Chinese Americans.

New York's Chinese strongly opposed the American neutrality policy in foreign affairs, particularly its policy towards Japan's invasion of China. They denounced the so-called American Neutrality Acts as a policy to help Japan destroy China, as American scrap iron sold to Japan was "to be turned into ammunition to blow Chinese villages to pieces."³⁷⁶ Referring to the selling of American oil to Japan as "a drop of oil means a drop of blood," they claimed that America's policy of neutrality was only helping the Japanese bomb more Chinese cities and kill more Chinese citizens.³⁷⁷ Challenging the American neutrality policy, New York's Chinese warned of the possible consequences of Japanese military expansion and appealed for American involvement in the war against Japan:

Japanese imperialists...have been exercising more and more coercion in their attempt to realize their sinister ambition -- [from] the exploitation of China [to] the domination of

³⁷⁶ Chinese Christian Student, Oct. 1937, 5

³⁷⁷ "Japanese Import of Oil," The Far Eastern Magazine, Vol.I, No.4, Feb. 1938

the Far East. ...The failure of [the international agreements to secure the active support of the signatories] has encouraged the Japanese imperialists to take even more aggressive action. [Therefore], we advocate forceful resistance to the ruthless invasion, ...³⁷⁸

During the years of advocating American involvement in war, New York's Chinese held a strong identity as Chinese Americans. They described their support of resistance to the worldwide imperialist expansions as "American spiritual and material help,"³⁷⁹ and considered it a necessary responsibility of Chinese Americans. In his essay, "American-born Chinese and Chino-Japanese Crisis," Lim P. Lee clearly announced the position and stance of Chinese Americans in the war as Americans. "As citizens of the United States," he said, American-born Chinese should remain neutral to avoid any conflict with a belligerent nation as "the United States government's policy was neutral."³⁸⁰ But when people in Europe as well as the Far East were "fighting with their backs to the walls for freedom and liberty against fascism," Chinese Americans could not remain silent. "We should support resistance wars" against military expansion worldwide, "so that the victims of the war would

³⁷⁸ Manifesto of the Chinese Students League of Greater New York, Chinese Christian Student, December 10, 1935

³⁷⁹ Chinese Christian Student, Oct, 1937, 5

³⁸⁰ "American-born Chinese and Chino-Japanese Crisis" by Lim P. Lee, Chinese Christian Student, Oct. 1937, 5

not think of Uncle Sam's neutrality policy as cold blooded, but of the fact that there was justice "to guide American actions" to maintain world peace.³⁸¹

Conclusion

Throughout the 1930's and the early 1940's when the United States remained neutral, New York's Chinese advocated American involvement in the war. Their active participation in the movements to support China against Japan's invasion and to endorse other ethnic groups' protest of German fascism demonstrated their stance for peace in the world.

Their appeal for global peace brought the sympathetic support of Americans and changed attitudes towards the Chinese in the United States. More importantly, New York's Chinese considered their supportive activities to be Americans' responsibilities in world affairs, thus reinforcing their identity as Americans. When the United States declared war against Japan after Pearl Harbor, New York's Chinese were involved in more activities to protect the country, as well as the world, from imperialist aggression.

³⁸¹ Ibid

CHAPTER VI.

PEARL HARBOR AND ITS AFTERMATH

Throughout the 1930's, the United States attempted to remain isolated from international affairs while the troubled world continued to suffer from imperialist expansion. However, efforts to keep a formal neutrality could not protect the United States from the spread of fascism and militarism. On December 7, 1941, Japanese bombers suddenly attacked the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor. Consequently, the United States was forced into war. This chapter describes the attack on Pearl Harbor and its impact on Americans. It focuses on the response of New York's Chinese Americans to this attack.

John Dower argues that the war changed the attitude of Americans towards Chinese Americans as they suddenly found themselves on the same line with China against Japan.³⁸² Fred W. Riggs suggests that in order to defeat Japan, the United States allied with China. This war strategy affected the longstanding anti-Chinese legislation and eventually brought an end to the

³⁸² John Dower, War Without Mercy, Race and Power in the Pacific War (New York, Pantheon Books, 1993)

Chinese exclusion laws.³⁸³ I argue in this chapter that New York's Chinese played a crucial role in changing American attitudes towards the Chinese. Repeal of the Exclusion legislation proved perhaps the most important consequence of their varied efforts to integrate as American citizens and to claim racial equality.

Chinese Americans and the War Front

Japanese bombers suddenly attacked the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Within two hours, the United States lost 8 battleships, 3 cruisers, 4 other vessels, 188 airplanes, and several vital shore installations. More tragically, more than 2,000 soldiers died, and another 1,000 were injured. The deficiency of the American policy in global affairs crippled the dignity of Americans. On the day after the Pearl Harbor attack, the United States finally declared war against Japan, thus marking the beginning of the United States' military engagement in World War II.

For years, Americans have tried to evaluate the ramifications of the attack. Traditional interpretations suggest that President Roosevelt deliberately suppressed the information of the forthcoming attack in the belief that a surprise attack would arouse the nation and thus lead American people to support the

³⁸³ Fred W. Riggs, Pressures on Congress: A Study of the Repeal of Chinese Exclusion (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1950)

United States' participation in World War II. Disagreeing with this kind of interpretation, revisionists argue that the success of the Pearl Harbor raid demonstrated American political and bureaucratic failure to access advance warning of the attack. Other scholars attribute the raid to American indifference to Japanese military expansion and the worldwide war crisis.³⁸⁴

The debate over Pearl Harbor has never fully subsided. But apparently, because of the attack, an epoch of isolationism in American history finally came to an end. Americans learned a hard lesson from the Pearl Harbor attack which demonstrated the inadequacy of American isolation as a policy in a moment of such global trouble. "We must begin the great task that is before us,"

³⁸⁴ Charles Beard, President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities (New Haven: Yale UP., 1948, 1968) is a classic interpretation of the President's decision to join the war. Basil Rauch, Roosevelt from Munich to Pearl Harbor (New York: Creative Age Press, 1950), Roberta Wholstetter, Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision (Stanford, California: Stanford UP., 1962), and Gordon W. Prange, At Dawn We Slept (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982) analyze the decisions of FDR and his administration in war policy. Dorothy Borg, The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: From the Manchurian Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP., 1964) is a basic work on American foreign policy in the Far East in war crisis. Herbert Feis, The Road to Pearl Harbor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950) assesses Japanese problems from various angles. Selig Adler, The Isolationist Impulse: Its Twentieth Century Reaction (London and New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1957) and Manfred Jonas, Isolationism in America 1935-1941 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP., 1966) are informative on American isolationism. Also see Hilary Conroy and Harry Wray, ed., Pearl Harbor Reexamined, Prologue to the Pacific (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).

President Franklin Roosevelt announced, to abandon "once and for all the illusion that we can ever again isolate ourselves from the rest of the humanity."

The whole country was mobilized. According to the New York Times, 17,717 enlisted in the army in the first week after the Pearl Harbor attack. Enlistment increased to 28,363 in the following week.³⁸⁵ Fifteen million men and women nationwide were drafted into the military forces during the war. Chinese Americans also joined the American army to defend this country. Twenty percent of Chinese Americans across the country served in the American military forces.³⁸⁶ They served in the Third and Fourth Infantry Divisions in the European war front; and in the Sixth, Thirty-second, and Seventy-seventh in Asia and the Pacific. Twenty-five percent of Chinese American recruits served in the American Air Force.³⁸⁷

Nearly 900,000 New Yorkers entered the armed forces that

³⁸⁵ New York Times, Dec. 24, 1941

³⁸⁶ Altogether 13,499 Chinese Americans enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces. Diane Mei Lin Mark and Ginger Chin, A Place Called Chinese America (The Organization of Chinese Americans, Inc. 1982), 97

³⁸⁷ Thomas Chinn, Bridging the Pacific: San Francisco Chinatown and Its People (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1989), 147-50; Sucheng Chan, Asian Americans-An Interpretive History (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 122

included New York's Chinese.³⁸⁸ By 1945, an estimated 4,000 young Chinese Americans from the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area were drafted.³⁸⁹ New York's Chinese had longed for American military engagement in the war. They saw the Pearl Harbor attack as an excessive assault against their land. It aroused their patriotism like everyone else. On December 10, twenty-six of New York's Chinese American associations sent a telegram to President Roosevelt to support the declaration of war. "For the sake of our country . . .," the telegram stated, "we whole-heartedly support the American declaration of war...."³⁹⁰ The New York Overseas-Chinese Anti-Japanese Association also expressed its endorsement. On December 20, this association sent a similar message to Congress supporting American involvement in the war: "We are more than happy to hear that the United States is finally getting into the war for peace."³⁹¹

³⁸⁸ Fredeick M. Binder and David M. Reimers, All the Nations Under Heaven- An Ethnic and Racial History of New York City (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995)

³⁸⁹ H.M. Lai, The Chinese of America: 1785-1980 (1980), 67. It was more than 33% of total New York's Chinese population. My estimate is based on the statistics Ira Rosenwaike provided. There were 12,753 Chinese living in New York in 1940. Population History of New York City (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972)

³⁹⁰ On Dec. 24, President Roosevelt sent back a message of appreciation for the support. Chinese Nationalist Daily, Jan. 24, 1942

³⁹¹ Chinese Nationalist Daily Dec. 20, 1941

To support the American war effort, Chinese Americans, both men and women, enlisted. The Chinese Nationalist Daily reported that the military recruitment service station in New York's Chinatown was often crowded.³⁹² Even though the traditional Chinese New Year was only days away, Chinese New Yorkers were in line at the station, eager to register as they considered enlisting more urgent than preparing for holiday festivities.³⁹³

Because there were so many Chinese American volunteers who were eager to join the military forces, the American military service began to put Chinese American veterans in charge of recruitment in the Chinese community.³⁹⁴ Sing Keel, a World War I veteran, was named Chairman of the Selective Service Board in New York's Chinatown.³⁹⁵ Lee Yinghuei was in charge of recruiting women

³⁹² Chinese Nationalist Daily, Jan. 12, 1942

³⁹³ January 15 was the Chinese New Year in 1942. Chinese Nationalist Daily, Jan. 17, 1942

³⁹⁴ In fact Young Chinese Americans joined the army before the United States officially entered the war. According to the Chinese Nationalist Daily, almost one hundred Chinese American New Yorkers were registered in the four United States army recruiting stations in New York in 1935. When another registration of the draft began in October, 1940, "men from New Jersey and Long Island farms poured into the draft office at P.S. 23 in New York's Chinatown." Chinese Nationalist Daily, April, 9, 1942

³⁹⁵ Sing was rewarded the Distinguished Service Cross medal for his bravery in World War I for his continuous running of a message center during a gas attack in Argon Forese. Arthur Bonner, Alas! What Brought Thee Hither? The Chinese in New York 1800-1950, (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1997), 175

at 40 Mott Street.³⁹⁶

Like other American soldiers, New York's Chinese fought in various war fronts. Chen Long and Chen Chongmin, among other Chinese American soldiers from New York, served on Sicily's war front.³⁹⁷ Peter Lee, a 1941 Columbia University graduate, served the Flying Tigers of the United States' Fourteenth Air Force to China under the command of Major General Claire Lee Chennault.³⁹⁸ The United States' Fourteenth Air Force was established in the spring of 1942 to cope with the anti-Japanese war in Asia. During the war, it demolished 234 enemy planes and coordinated successfully with the Allied Power's ground forces.³⁹⁹

New York's Chinese women also demonstrated themselves as valuable supporters for the American military defense. They

³⁹⁶ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 21, 1943

³⁹⁷ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Sept. 28, 1943

³⁹⁸ Chinatown History Project, New York's Chinatown Historical Museum

³⁹⁹ Anna Chennault wrote an autobiography, The Education of Anna (New York: Time Books, 1980). In her book, she traced the history of the United States' Fourteenth Air Force. According to Anna, the Air Force was the smallest American air force ever to be commanded by a general. Yet, it contributed greatly to assisting China in her defense. The Air Force was originally the American Volunteer Group. It soon reorganized as China Air Task Force. By 1942, it had become the United States' Fourteenth Air Force combating in China-India-Burma military theater. It was a small air force with two hundred men and a few dented planes that General Chennault started out with. It had grown to 30,000 men and 1,000 planes by 1945.

departed from traditional female roles and joined the armed forces. The difficulties for women were exemplified by Emily Lee Shak, the first Chinese woman to join the army. She had lived on a special Chinese diet to reach the 105-pound minimum weight requirement to join the army.⁴⁰⁰ Hazel Toy was one of the first Chinese American women volunteers enlisted in the air unit of the Women's Army Corps in 1943.⁴⁰¹ Chinese American women also voluntarily joined the army as nurses.⁴⁰² The active participation of New York's young Chinese women in the war effort received the support of the Chinese community. Parties and ceremonies were held as they left to the war front. For example, when Lee Ying, an American Air Force cadet, was leaving for the front line, she was honored by New York's Chinese community.⁴⁰³

A special naval personnel training school, the New York Chinatown Naval Academy, was established to assist the war efforts. It recruited sixteen young Chinese Americans as its first term cadets. In addition to field drills, the school also provided two basic courses, naval navigation and mechanics, to ensure qualified

⁴⁰⁰ Florence Gee, "I am an American: How can I Help Win This War?" Chinese Press, May 15, 1942; "Women in the War," Chinese Press, March 24, 1943; "First Chinese WAAC: New York's Emily Lee Shak," Chinese Press, September 25, 1942; Takaki, Strangers From a Different Shore, 373

⁴⁰¹ Mark and Chin, A Place Called Chinese America, 96

⁴⁰² Chinese Nationalist Daily, April 9, 1942

⁴⁰³ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Aug. 7, 1943

naval personnel for the of war.⁴⁰⁴ This was an unusual military program created and sponsored by the Chinese in New York in response to the war.

Mark Him Lai and Shih-shan Tsai suggest that the zeal of Chinese Americans for American military intervention in global affairs came from their anti-Japanese sentiment.⁴⁰⁵ Their military service can be seen as a temporary solution to the devastating effects of unemployment on the Chinese during the Depression as well. However, evidence also demonstrates that Chinese Americans became aware of the significance of the war as a moment for them to participate in mainstream politics. For decades since the Exclusion laws of 1882, New York's Chinese had fought to be part of society. World War II created an opportunity for them to participate as a way of identifying themselves as Americans. "We joined the army for America," Kain Chen, a Chinese American veteran of World War II, said in an interview. "We were not simply fighting for China. Instead, we fought for the United States, ..."

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Kain Chen's words reflected a growing consciousness of

⁴⁰⁴ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Dec. 30, 1941

⁴⁰⁵ Mark Him Lai, The Chinese of America 1785-1980 (1980); Shih-shan Tsai, China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States (1983)

⁴⁰⁶ Interview with Kain Chin in the Symposium, "Allies and Enemies: the Dilemma of Asian-Americans during World War II," New York, Dec. 1996

Chinese New Yorkers to be regarded as Americans citizens. Fighting along with other American soldiers, they felt proud to be trusted to defend America as their own country. Arthur Wang, a war veteran, recalled that "in those days, you felt privileged to handle a gun to defend your country in World War II."⁴⁰⁷ Harold Liu recalled that the period of World War II "was just a whole different era in the community. ... My own brother went into the service. We were so proud that they were in uniform" fighting along with other American soldiers.⁴⁰⁸ As Chinese and Americans were fighting together against their common enemies, Liu said, "we began to feel very good about ourselves. ... It was a nice feeling for the big change."⁴⁰⁹

The "nice feeling for the big change" of New York's Chinese indicated a large collective interior transformation in Chinese American self-definition. It was not simply the individuals who enlisted that participated in this radically positive redefinition of community and self, but also parents and neighbors. When the United States declared war against Japan, supportive parents sent their children to the war front for the defense of America. Ng

⁴⁰⁷ Interview with Arthur Wang. Joan Morrison and Charlotte Fox Zabusdy, American Mosaic- The Immigrants Experience In The Words of Those Who Lived It (New York, E.P. Dutton, 1980), 77

⁴⁰⁸Diane Mei Lin Mark and Ginger Chih, A Place Called Chinese America, 98

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid

Wing, a resident of Chinatown, sent all three of his sons to the army during the war and was honored as a model Chinese American by the Chinese community.⁴¹⁰ Business owners honored new recruits by providing them with free services. Pong Jiajang, a laundry owner, decided to let all army recruits wash and dry their clothes free of charge. One of his customers was moved to say that he would kill more Japanese enemies in gratitude.⁴¹¹

The dedication of and sacrifices by Chinese Americans during the war proved them to be patriotic Americans. Ninety Chinese American soldiers from New York lost their lives to the war. Among them were Lincoln Ng and David Ng, two sons of Wing Ng,⁴¹² Lieutenant A. Fong, and twenty-six year old Lieutenant Benjamin Ralph Kimlau, the first Chinese American heavy bomber pilot. They were honored by the Chinese community and their heroic deeds received recognition by the American military forces. Benjamin Kimlau was honored by the Chinese community as a war hero when he died after his B-24 was shot down in the Battle of Coral Sea in the Pacific in August 1942.⁴¹³ A. Fong was awarded a medal for his

⁴¹⁰ Arthur Bonner, Alas! What Brought Thee Hither? The Chinese In New York 1800-1950, 176

⁴¹¹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Jan. 20, 1942

⁴¹² Bonner, Alas! What Brought Thee Hither?, 176

⁴¹³ Bonner, Alas! What Brought Thee Hither?, 175

bravery by the American Army.⁴¹⁴

The highly spirited and substantial support of Chinese New Yorkers for America's military defense also showed itself in various civilian activities. Organized fund-raising for the war front, for example, was one of such activities. Led by the Chinese Students Association, the "A Bowl of Rice for War" campaign was launched immediately after the United States officially joined the war. In just one day, it collected \$800 from New York Chinese.⁴¹⁵ On December 16, 1941, the Association in Support of China organized a donation bazaar on Mott Street.⁴¹⁶ On December 24, 1941, the National Association in Support of China made a Christmas pledge to collect \$25,000 through sponsoring a benefit show of the "Adventure of Marco Polo."⁴¹⁷ On January 1, 1942, the Association of Chinese American Youth to Support China and the War organized a New Year's parade to collect money. Lee Diannai contributed 550 Chinese dollars and Wu Qi donated 100 Chinese dollars at this event.⁴¹⁸ In March 1942, during a "Chinese Day" parade, New York University

⁴¹⁴ His 75 year old father, Fong Zhou took the honor to receive a medal from the American Army for his bravery. Chinese Nationalist Daily, Aug. 31, 1943

⁴¹⁵ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Dec. 16, 1941

⁴¹⁶ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Dec. 19, 1941

⁴¹⁷ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Dec. 26, 1941

⁴¹⁸ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Jan. 5, 1942

students raised \$6,000.⁴¹⁹ By September 15, 1943, a total amount of \$12,200 in cash had been collected from New York's Chinese for the war front.⁴²⁰

Chinese New Yorkers also launched campaigns for blood donations, another kind of activity to support the war. Many of New York's Chinese contributed to the campaigns. In a one-day street drive on June 23, 1943, \$1,701 was collected to endorse blood donation drives.⁴²¹ A twenty-two year old Japanese American girl donated her blood to show her solidarity with the Chinese and as a protest against Japanese barbarism.⁴²² On October 27, 1943, a day set up as "a day for a drop of blood", more than one hundred of New York's Chinese volunteers donated their blood.⁴²³

In addition to military service, fund-raising, and blood donation, New York's Chinese community also mobilized its people to purchase as many war bonds as possible as a means of supporting the American war effort. "Every Chinese American should buy war bonds for liberty" was a popular slogan in New York's Chinatown during war time.⁴²⁴ On September 28, 1943, Chinatown organizations

⁴¹⁹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, March 5, 1942

⁴²⁰ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Sept. 15, 1943

⁴²¹ Chinese Nationalist Daily, July 19, 1943

⁴²² Chinese Nationalist Daily, July 20, 1943

⁴²³ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 27, 1943

⁴²⁴ Ibid

initiated a joint effort to arouse people to purchase war bonds. More than twenty members of the Women Volunteers Association participated to make it a success. Thousands of New York's Chinese residents bought war bonds on that day.⁴²⁵ When Chen Dayi bought \$20,000 worth of war bonds at one time, he was honored by the whole Chinese community.⁴²⁶ By October 9, 1943, the total amount of war bonds purchased by New York's Chinese residents reached \$4,134,075.⁴²⁷ World War II opened opportunities for Chinese Americans to demonstrate their commitment to the nation, a reflection of their long-standing desire to be accepted as part of American society. Their active support of what America needed for the war front proved them to be patriotic Americans. The war also created opportunities for the Chinese in the United States to participate in wartime industrial production, an area which had been previously unavailable to them.

Chinese Americans on the Home Front

The American war engagement boosted the economy and created opportunities for Chinese Americans to move out of traditional service businesses of restaurants and laundries and become engaged in wartime production, which was regarded as a socially valued

⁴²⁵ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Sept. 28, 1943

⁴²⁶ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Sept. 29, 1943

⁴²⁷ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 9, 1943

activity.

As early as 1939, President Roosevelt promised that American armaments would be made available to the Allied armies to help them compete against the highly productive German munitions industry. The possibility of making the United States an "arsenal of Democracy" resulted in the revision of 1939 Neutrality Acts which permitted belligerent nations to purchase American arms on the same cash-and-carry basis that earlier Neutrality Acts had established for the sale of nonmilitary materials. In March 1941, Congress passed a Lend-Lease bill authorizing the President to sell, lease or lend war materials to any nation whose defense was considered vital to America's safety.⁴²⁸

The new legislation and the demands of wartime production created a boom in the American economy. The gross national product soared from \$91 billion in 1939 to \$166 billion in 1945. The impact of government spending was most dramatic during the boom. The federal government invested almost \$40 billion in factories, military and transportation facilities, highways and power plants in the West alone. Many new factory complexes were funded directly

⁴²⁸ For the brief description of the prewar diplomacy, see Warren Kimball, The Most Unsordid Act: Lend-Lease, 1939-1941 (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 1920, 1969), Joseph Lash, Roosevelt and Churchill (New York: Norton, 1976); and David Reynold, The creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937-1941 (Chapall Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982). Robert Dallek, Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1933-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) is more comprehensive and covers the war year.

by the federal government's Defense Plants Corporation. By the beginning of 1944, the output of American factories was twice that of all the Axis countries combined. Constituting a "third front" in the global fighting, the American industrial economy became vital to the war effort. Joseph Stalin once toasted the wartime American production, saying that without American production, "the war would have been lost."⁴²⁹

Historians agree that the war economy provided vital support for the Allies in the Second World War. Scholars also point to the doubling of job opportunities.⁴³⁰ As American wartime industry flourished, the demand for labor greatly increased. With 15 million men and women entering the military forces, 7 million Americans who had previously been off the jobs market entered the labor force. Workers who had been unemployed for years found jobs in war-related factories and plants.

The war time economy employed a large portion of the working population. Because of so many Americans going off to war, the

⁴²⁹ Edward E. Bennett, Recognition of Russia (Waltham, Mass.: Blaisdell, 1970); Robert Browder, The Origins of Society-American Diplomacy, (1953). For war mobilization, see Paul A. C. Koistinen, The Military-Industrial Complex: A Historical Perspective (New York: Praeger, 1980); Donald Nelson, Arsenal of Democracy (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946)

⁴³⁰ David Brinkley, Washington Goes to War (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1988) is informative on the home front. But for a broader treatment see John Blum, "V" was for Victory (New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1976) and Richard Polenberg, War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972)

labor shortage opened opportunities for Chinese immigrants to participate in American industrial activities which had excluded them for decades. There are no official statistics on the wartime employment of Chinese nationwide. However, contemporary Chinese American publications indicated that the Chinese increasingly found jobs in shipyards, airplane factories, and defense plants. In Los Angeles, some three hundred Chinese worked on the construction of the ship, "China Victory". In Douglas, there were approximately one hundred Chinese working at the three defense plants of Santa Monica, Long Beach and El Segundo. Chinese workers constituted fifteen percent of the shipyard work force in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1943. Chinese workers also found jobs in the defense industries at the Seattle-Tacoma Shipbuilding Corporation, and in the shipyards of Delaware and Mississippi.⁴³¹

In New York, about thirty percent of male Chinese were employed in defense plants by 1942.⁴³² Timing Ship, a ship-building factory, reportedly looked for 400 new workers among the Chinese population in New York.⁴³³ Chinese New Yorkers also found jobs in airplane factories on Long Island. They worked as assemblers, as

⁴³¹ The Chinese Press, April 2, 1943; Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore (1989), 374

⁴³² "All Chinatown Responds to War Needs," Chinese Press, Jan. 2, 1942; Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore (1989), 374

⁴³³ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 29, 1943

well as riveters and welders.⁴³⁴

World War II also changed the pattern of the employment of Chinese American professionals. College-educated Chinese were able to find jobs in their fields of specialization, such as architecture and engineering.⁴³⁵ Lingchi Wang's study of Chinese employment in the United States in professional and technical jobs from 1940 to 1950 reveals that in 1940, 1,000 out of 36,000 employed Chinese held professional and technical jobs. In 1950, some 3,500 out of 48,000 Chinese Americans were employed as professionals and technicians.⁴³⁶

The increasing demand for labor during the war also provided job opportunities for Chinese women. According to Rose Hum Lee's research, "Even girls were getting jobs" working as office workers and secretaries during the war.⁴³⁷ Women constituted one-fifth of the employed Chinese population in 1940. In 1950, the proportion increased to one-third.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁴ H.M. Lai, The Chinese of America 1785-1980 (1980)

⁴³⁵ Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore, (1989), 374

⁴³⁶ Lingchi Wang, "The Politics of Assimilation and Repression" (unpublished manuscript); Sucheng Chan, Asian Americans (1991), 123

⁴³⁷ Rose Hum Lee, Survey Graphic, 1942; Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore (1989), 375

⁴³⁸ Lingchi Wang, "The Politics of Assimilation and Repression" (unpublished manuscript); Sucheng Chan, Asian Americans (1991), 123

New York's Chinese were aware of the importance of the war in enabling them to join the industrial and professional labor force, especially as their participation in wartime production received social recognition. Some, like Arthur Wang, reached managerial levels, climbing the job ladders previously unavailable to them. Wang started out as an assembler at Critss-Wright plant, an airplane plant in Long Island. Then he worked as a riveter. By the time he left for the army, he had already been an assistant to a foreman. He had twenty-eight people working for him before he "got drafted by Uncle Sam."⁴³⁹

Chinese New Yorker's active participation in wartime production was another factor contributing to Americans' changing image of them. A Gallup poll taken in 1942 showed that responders characterized the Chinese as "hardworking, honest, brave, religious, intelligent, and practical."⁴⁴⁰ As industrial workers in ship and airplane building industries and as specialists in professional fields during the war, Chinese New Yorkers found themselves with the opportunity to become economically assimilated.

Greater participation in mainstream economic activities also

⁴³⁹ Interview with Arthur Wang, Joan Morrison and Charlotte Fox Zabusdy, American Mosaic The Immigrant Experience In The Words of Those Who Lived It (New York, E.P. Dutton, 1980), 77

⁴⁴⁰ Harold R. Isaacs, Images of Asia: American Views of China and India (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), XVIII-XIX (Originally polished in 1958 under the title Scratches on Our Mind; Sucheng Chan, Asian Americans (1991), 121

provided the impetus for New York's Chinese to integrate into society in other ways. They began to move out of their ethnic community and settle in other areas to be close to work. They settled in Long Island, Queens and Brooklyn.

As we have seen, the war changed the image of the Chinese in the United States. Their active participation in World War II on both the war front and the home front contributed to the creation of a new image. They were no longer seen as strangers or aliens. Instead, they began to be considered allies. As the war continued, Chinese American political activists in New York grasped the opportunity and opened a new frontier for the legalization of Chinese immigrants in the United States.

The War and the Repeal of the Exclusion Laws

On November 11, 1943, Congress passed a repeal bill that terminated the Chinese Exclusion Acts which had barred almost all Chinese immigration since 1882.⁴⁴¹ Historians suggest that the American government's repeal of Chinese Exclusion was an emergency war measure to combat Japanese war propaganda. Since China had already been at war against Japan, repeal presented a prominent feature of the war effort to keep China as an ally.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴¹ See Chapter I for the information on Chinese Exclusion laws.

⁴⁴² For information of the Japanese war propaganda, see John Dower's book, War Without Mercy, Race and Power in the Pacific

However, as I will demonstrate, repeal was also a legal achievement of the Chinese in the United States, who regained their basic constitutional right to live and to work in the land they chose as home. Their demand for racial equality and their participation in the repeal movement eventually brought an end to the Chinese exclusion laws. The repeal efforts of New York's Chinese, as I will show, mirrored their growing political consciousness and reflected their active participation in mainstream activities. Their contributions to the American war effort significantly supported their demands for legal status in the United States.

The Japanese government launched a major ideological anti-Anglo--American propaganda offensive before Pearl Harbor. Accusing the United States and its European allies of mistreating millions of Asian people and exploiting Asian nations, the Japanese Ministry of Education issued a manifesto entitled "the Way of the Subject" in August 1941, defining the war as "a struggle between race." Japanese propaganda condemned the United States in particular for its discriminatory laws and for segregating the Chinese in ghettos where they had been relegated to "the most menial of occupations,

War (New York, Pantheon Books, 1993). Fred W. Riggs, Pressures on Congress- A Study of the Repeal of Chinese Exclusion (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1950) provides adequate materials of the debates on repeal.

despised and mistreated."⁴⁴³

Like Nazi Germany, Japan used race issues as an excuse for war. As a matter of fact, behind the Japanese accusation, more than 30 million Chinese civilians were killed by Japanese soldiers, while 6 million Jews were persecuted in the Holocaust, during World War II. More than 350,000 noncombatant Chinese died in a few weeks in late December 1937 and early 1938 during the Nanking Massacre.⁴⁴⁴ In order to combat the Japanese accusation and to convince the world that racial prejudice was unacceptable in the United States, China, as a Chicago newspaper stated, became America's "white hope" in the East.⁴⁴⁵

New York's Chinese took the American war strategy as a means of fulfilling their goals. They intensified their effort to bring an end to the Chinese Exclusion legislation. In early 1943, organizations as well as individuals of New York's Chinese community launched a petition campaign for the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Law. They wrote letters to American authorities and law-making institutions to appeal for racial equality. The Chinese Women's Association of New York took the lead in the petition writing campaign.

⁴⁴³ Dower, War Without Mercy (1993)

⁴⁴⁴ Iris Chang, The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II (L.L.C. Basic Books, 1997)

⁴⁴⁵ Dower, War Without Mercy (1993), 164

On February 16, 1943, Theodora Chan Wang, president of the Chinese Women's Association of New York, wrote to Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt, asking for a revision of the Chinese immigration laws. Denouncing racial discrimination, she firmly demanded equal treatment of the Chinese. What Chinese Americans wanted, wrote Wang, was merely an immigration quota, so that the Chinese would be accorded the privileges enjoyed by "our companions."⁴⁴⁶ This moderate request was followed by a strong response from the leading organization of New York's Chinatown, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. On May 4, it sent a message to Congress demanding the repeal of the exclusion legislation, calling it a most serious violation of the fundamental principles of equality.⁴⁴⁷ At the same time, individual Chinese New Yorkers also wrote letters to petition for repeal. George Kin Leung, a New York Chinese resident, wrote to Marin Kennedy, a New York representative to Congress,

Born in New Jersey,...and now sojourning in our New York City, you may imagine how keenly I feel on this subject. [The] friendship between China and America... must be fed now, before the war ends, to make easy the post-war

⁴⁴⁶ Riggs, Pressures on Congress- A Study of the Repeal of Chinese Exclusion (1950), 111

⁴⁴⁷ Riggs, Pressures on Congress (1950), 112-113; Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore (1989), 376

cooperation.⁴⁴⁸

This letter sent another strong message demanding an immediate termination of the racially based Chinese Exclusion Law. Moreover, Leung also suggested the possible political cooperation between the United States and China for the sake of the world peace, not only during, but also after the war.

Other New York Chinese residents, such as Yu Tang and Li Chenhuei, also urged an immediate termination of the Chinese Exclusion Laws. There was no reason for the United States to delay repeal, they said, it was "better for the United States to ban the racial laws sooner and for ever."⁴⁴⁹

On October 21, 1943, the Chinese Nationalist Daily published a poll on the issue showing that the majority of Chinese New Yorkers supported immediate repeal.⁴⁵⁰ It also revealed their concern about global peace. Yi Jianlong, director of the Blood Donation Committee of New York Chinatown, told a reporter that in order to combat the racial war propaganda of the Japanese, the United States should neither hesitate to terminate the legislation nor leave any possibilities for Japan to find excuses for war.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁸ Fred Riggs, Pressures on Congress- A Study of the Repeal of Chinese Exclusion (1950), 112-113

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid

⁴⁵⁰ Chinese Nationalist Daily, Oct. 21, 1943

⁴⁵¹ Ibid

The position of New York's Chinese in the repeal campaign demonstrated their political maturity. The repeal issue was clearly articulated as a desire for racial equality and justice. It revealed their understanding that repeal could be advocated as a war measure for the United States and could be used to support their hopes for the future cooperation of America and China.

Petitions for the repeal of Chinese exclusion laws received sympathetic support from other New Yorkers who also saw the necessity of reforming racially discriminatory legislation for the benefit of the war. Richard Walsh, a leading political activist in the repeal campaign, argued that Americans must act for "justice toward our Chinese allies," and demanded a fair legal treatment of Chinese within the framework of a quota system.⁴⁵²

In May 1943, New York's political activists established a special organization, the Citizens Committee, to lobby for repeal.⁴⁵³ Headed by Richard Walsh, editor of the magazine Asia and the Americas, the committee's agenda was to participate in activities to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Law "with the added

⁴⁵² Richard Walsh: " Report to the Members of the Citizens Committee." Citizens Committee archives, Sept. 10, 1943. "Citizens Committee, to Repeal Chinese Exclusion and Place Immigration on a Quota Basis." New York's Public Library archives.

⁴⁵³ Political advocates in other states were also active in the campaign. In 1942, the California League of Women Voters of San Francisco initiated an educational campaign for the removal of racial discrimination from the immigration law.

objectives of placing Chinese immigration on a quota basis and making Chinese residents eligible for American citizenship."⁴⁵⁴

Emphasizing the immediate goal of repealing the discriminatory legislation before the war's end, members of the Citizens Committee publicized the destructive racial aspect of the Chinese Exclusion Law through various media to draw public attention to the issue. They exerted their influence through newspaper editorials, radio broadcasts, letters to "old China hands", and lobbying in Washington for the recognition of Chinese immigrants' legal status in the United States, believing that the principle to eliminate "all racial discriminations" from American immigration and naturalization laws should be enhanced.⁴⁵⁵ Within three months of its establishment, two hundred and twenty three members of the Citizens Committee wrote editorials for the Saturday Evening Post, the New York Times and fifty-two other newspapers in over twenty two states. Fourteen radio broadcasting programs relating to the Chinese exclusion issues were made through various stations such as WABC and WNYC.⁴⁵⁶

The Committee's effort for repeal received support from

⁴⁵⁴ "Citizens Committee, to Repeal Chinese Exclusion and Place Immigration on a Quota Basis." May, 1943, New York's Public Library archives

⁴⁵⁵ "Citizens Committee, to Repeal Chinese Exclusion and Place Immigration on a Quota Basis." Aug. 15, 1943, New York's Public Library archives

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid

various local New York organizations, particularly religious groups and labor unions, including New York's Chinese labor organizations. The Cafeteria Employees Union, local 302 of the American Federation of Labor in New York,⁴⁵⁷ the Chinese Women's Association of the CIO, the International Garment Workers Union, and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America were among the twenty five organizations that successively passed resolutions for repeal.⁴⁵⁸

Individual New Yorkers also participated in the petition campaign. Frances W. Butterfield, member of the New York City Alumnae Association at Randolph-Macon College, sent a letter to all alumnae, asking them to work for repeal and to write their Congressmen and their friends. As a result, several local club projects for repeal were established.⁴⁵⁹

As the popular campaign for repeal grew, New York legislators also moved to initiate legal action. On February 17, 1943, Representative Martin Kennedy of New York introduced a repeal bill in the House. Thus, the campaign for repeal forced its way onto the national political agenda.

At the same time, Congress also moved towards a favorable

⁴⁵⁷ The national agenda of the AFL was conservative on the repeal issue.

⁴⁵⁸ "Citizens Committee, to Repeal Chinese Exclusion and Place Immigration on a Quota Basis." Aug. 15, 1943, New York's Public Library archives

⁴⁵⁹ Fred W. Riggs, Pressures on Congress (1950), 139

solution to the Chinese exclusion laws. Considering the imperatives of the war strategy, it invited Madame Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) to the United States, a signal for the promotion of a better relationship between the two countries. On February 18, 1943, Congress invited Madame Chiang to address a joint session of Congress. In her speech, she sent a strong message to the United States about what China needed for cooperative support in its anti-Japanese war. "Basically and fundamentally," she said, "we are fighting for the same cause. ... We have identity of ideals of... freedom. ... I feel that it is necessary for us not only to have ideals," but also to "act to implement them."⁴⁶⁰

Madame Chiang Kai-shek's (Jiang Jieshi) speech for the implementation of ideals for freedom raised the issue of the legal status of Chinese immigrants in the United States. At a dinner party on May 15, 1943, Madame Chiang once again indicated the possible impact of the repeal of the Chinese exclusion laws when she talked to several key congressmen about the war in Asia. The repeal of the Chinese exclusion laws, she said, would boost Chinese morale and buttress her country's war effort.⁴⁶¹ Although Madame Chiang's words on the repeal were still in the framework of war consideration, they helped push Congress to move forward to place

⁴⁶⁰ Congressional Record, 78th Congress 1st sess, 1943, 1080-1081

⁴⁶¹ Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore (1989), 376

the repeal issue on its agenda. In the middle of May, Congress called the Immigration and Naturalization Committee of the House to begin public hearings on various bills relating to the repeal of the Chinese exclusion laws.⁴⁶²

During hearings, the Chinese in the United States played a vital role in providing evidence to convince legislators the destructive nature of the racial legislation. Lin Min Hin, a medical doctor, and Paul Yee, an electronics engineer, among other Chinese and Asian Americans, testified before the House hearings.⁴⁶³

In addition to providing testimony, Chinese communities in the United States worked with other groups. They raised money to support lobbying in Congress. According to the statistics, one-fourth of the funds(\$1,116) received by the Citizens Committee was from the Chinese community in Hawaii.⁴⁶⁴

However, the repeal campaign and efforts to rally support for the proposed legislation faced familiar obstacles of fear and anti-Chinese hostility. The American Federation of Labor again raised the specter of an invasion of an army of laborers from China. An immigration quota for the Chinese, the union warned, would lead to

⁴⁶² Samuel Dickstein of New York chaired the Committee. His consistent favor for the bills to liberalize the immigration laws played a fundamental role in determining the course of legislation. Riggs, Pressure on Congress (1950), 177

⁴⁶³ "A Chinese Youth Meeting" Chinese Press, Oct. 1, 1943; Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore (1989), 377

⁴⁶⁴ Riggs, Pressure on Congress (1950), 112

pressures to open the gates even wider: If England with a population of 100 million had a quota of 65,000, then China with population of 400 million could demand and get U.S. annual quotas of over one million.⁴⁶⁵ The influx, the union argued, would jeopardize the American labor force.

Nevertheless, the traditional assumptions of labor tension caused by the influx of Chinese immigrants could not hold the national political floor in the time of the war. On October 7, 1943, after several hearings, the Committee of Immigration and Naturalization favorably reported on H. R. 3070, recommending the repeal of the exclusion laws. After serious debates, the Senate Immigration Committee passed the repeal bill with a unanimous recommendation.⁴⁶⁶

On October 11, 1943, President Roosevelt sent Congress a message favoring the repeal bill. "China is our ally," Roosevelt wrote. "For many long years she stood alone in the fight against aggression. Today we fight at her side. She has continued her gallant struggle against very great odds."⁴⁶⁷

In addition to the war consideration of keeping China as an

⁴⁶⁵ Rose Hum Lee, "Chinese in the United States Today, the War Had Changed Their Lives," Survey Graphic, October 1942, 444; Takaki, Strangers from Different Shore (1989), 375

⁴⁶⁶ Fred Riggis, Pressure on Congress, 182

⁴⁶⁷ Congressional Record, 78th, sess. 1 Oct. 11, 1943, 8199-8200

ally, the President also saw the historical importance of the repeal for racial equality. He urged equal treatment of the Chinese while expressing his gratitude for the contributions of Chinese immigrants to the cause of freedom and justice in the United States. President Roosevelt addressed Congress in October 1943, urging them to "be big enough" to acknowledge and correct an error of the past. "By the repeal of the Chinese exclusion laws," he said,

we can correct a historic mistake and silence the distorted Japanese propaganda. The enactment of legislation now pending before Congress would put Chinese immigrants on a parity with those from other countries.... While it would give the Chinese a preferred status over a certain Oriental people, their great contribution to the cause of decency and freedom entitle them to such preference.⁴⁶⁸

On December 17, the president signed the repeal bill into law, thus terminating the legislation that had racially barred Chinese immigration for sixty-one years.

The 1943 repeal of the Exclusion Law was a consequence of American war efforts to combat the Japanese. However, the repeal was also a result of Chinese demands for racial equality. The active and sustained participation of New York's Chinese in the repeal campaign played an important role in ending the legislation. The repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Law served as a milestone in the history of New York's Chinese community. The persistent

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid

efforts of New York's Chinese to win their constitutional right to live and to work in the United States finally paid off.

However, the repeal only marked an historical turning of the ways by initiating a gradual process of removing racial discrimination from the immigration laws of the United States. When Chinese American soldiers returned from the war, they found they were not welcomed as American heroes. Instead, like black Americans, they were still subjected to racial discrimination. "I felt so frustrated that I was denied American citizenship when I came back home after fighting in Italy and France for the United States," a World War II veteran from New York recalled.⁴⁶⁹ Kain Chin, another war veteran, also expressed his resentment when he realized that his family was still suffering from racial antagonism after he came back home from the war front. "My family had been in this country for almost a century, and I served in the American army," he said. But "we were still treated like aliens."⁴⁷⁰

The repeal did not lead to a great increase in Chinese immigration, either. In one respect, the repeal consolidated American's restrictive immigration policy. The annual quota of 105 barred large numbers of Chinese immigrants from getting into the

⁴⁶⁹ An interview with Kem Louei, daughter of the war veteran in the Symposium, "Silent No More: Asian American Women Speak Out," New York, 1997

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with Kain Chin in the Symposium, "Allies and Enemies: the dilemma of Asian-Americans during World War II," New York, 1996

country. Thomas Kessner states that strictly speaking, the repeal was only a public relations gesture. It was a necessary step in undercutting Japanese propaganda accusing the United States of prejudice against Asians. The idea of dropping the bar to Chinese immigrants never represented a change of heart of the American immigration policy.⁴⁷¹

Nevertheless, with the repeal of both the exclusion laws and the naturalization prohibition, Chinese immigrants were granted legal opportunities to build normal lives in America. When the war was over, more Chinese women were permitted to come to the country to join their husbands and families as a result of a new law that extended nonquota immigration status to Chinese wives of citizens, admitting these Chinese wives to the United States without regard to the annual quota.⁴⁷² From 1945 to 1948, four thousand Chinese women entered the United States under the War Bride and GI Acts. As a result, the male-to-female ratio approached parity and the number of families increased.⁴⁷³ The old bachelor society was being replaced by a newly structured social order and family system that was to become a mainstay of the stability of the Chinese community. By 1960 there were 134,549 males to 101,743 females of Chinese

⁴⁷¹ Thomas Kessner and Betty Caroli, Today's Immigrants, Their Stories: A New Look at the Latest Immigrants (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 237

⁴⁷² On Aug. 9, 1946, Congress passed the new law.

⁴⁷³ H.M. Lai, The Chinese of America 1785-1980 (1980), 70

origin living in the United States.⁴⁷⁴

New York's Chinese community was also affected by the repeal bill. By the end of the 1940's, New York's Chinese population reached 20,171.⁴⁷⁵ The influx of women and children changed the life of the Chinese community. Former Chinatown residents recalled that for the first time, they saw young Chinese women and children living in New York's Chinatown during the period right after the war.⁴⁷⁶ Optimistic for their future life in the United States, Chinese New Yorkers continued to struggle for racial equality and to work hard for their own prosperity.

Conclusion

World War II changed the life of the Chinese in New York. Shared experiences of fighting for justice and for the defense of the United States brought Chinese American New Yorkers closer. Chinese New Yorkers' sincere and continuous efforts to support the war against fascism eventually won the recognition of the American society. The active participation of New York's Chinese on both war and home fronts demonstrated their desire and determination to

⁴⁷⁴ Lai, The Chinese of America (1980), 173; David M. Reimers, Still the Golden Door: The Third World Comes to America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992)

⁴⁷⁵ Decennial censuses, 1950; B.L.Sung, Mountain of Gold (1968), 112

⁴⁷⁶ David M. Reimers, Still the Golden Door, The Third World Comes to America (1992), 27

regain recognition as American citizens. This growing political consciousness was also reflected in their demand for the repeal of the exclusion laws. Their involvement in mainstream politics as responsible American citizens and their efforts for racial equality and justice benefitted them in the end.

CONCLUSION

New York's Chinese community, like other ethnic American groups, experienced economic crisis, war, and social upheaval in the period I have studied. The hardships of the Great Depression reinforced racial discrimination and poverty. However, the devastating situation stirred a new generation of New York's Chinese who actively sought reform. The rapid growth of self-reliant and self-determined labor unions and small business associations added to a new generation's changing awareness of and shifting attitudes and practices toward dealing with economic crisis and racial discrimination. No longer constrained within their own ethnic culture for protection, community members moved into mainstream activities as a way of demanding their basic constitutional rights to live and to work in the United States. Active participation in national and local political campaigns demonstrated this new political maturity.

My findings in Chapters II and IV detail this new political maturity. Beginning with the Chinese Exclusion Law of 1882, exclusionary legislation barred Chinese immigrants from entering this country and prohibited the naturalization of those who had already been in the United States. Racial discrimination and riots

took place in various regions and many Chinese were killed. In order to protect themselves, New York's Chinese stayed in their own ethnic enclave. However, as I have shown, they did not passively accept racial inferiority and enforced isolation. Instead, they resisted. During the years of exclusion, they constantly took their cases to court, an American way of fighting for legal recognition of equality. They also participated in demonstrations seeking public support.

Their persistent resistance underwent tremendous changes during the Depression when laborers, small businessmen, students, women, and other ordinary Chinese New Yorkers organized and participated in mainstream activities. Represented by the Lien Yi Society, the Chinese Unemployed Council and other organizations, laborers not only independently conducted strikes but also successfully integrated their activities into the mainstream labor movement. Their efforts to reach out to create alliances with other American labor organizations demonstrated the increasing self-consciousness of New York's Chinese to be part of American society.

Like labor organizations, a new type of trade union also emerged during the Depression. The Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance and the Chinese American Restaurant Association of Greater New York were good examples of this new type of organization. Activities such as opposition to the city's discriminatory laundry ordinances

and support for New Deal efforts to combat the Depression demonstrated their demand for equal treatment and their desire to involve themselves in mainstream politics.

Although labor unions and small business organizations were originally formed to deal with economic difficulties in the 1930's, their self-determined and self-reliant activities challenged traditional modes of control within the ethnic Chinese community. Their demand for legal protection by the American government and their desire to involve themselves in mainstream politics also effectively challenged the legacy of racist exclusion. Therefore, these organizations were also pioneer Chinese civil rights organizations in New York City.

The formation of political organizations also demonstrated the new political maturity of New York's Chinese. The Chinese American Citizens Alliance, the New York Chinese American Voting League, and the New York Chinese American Committee of the National Democratic Party encouraged Chinese Americans to use their right to vote, thereby marking a new strategy and means of claiming their civil rights as American citizens. In contrast to accepted historical literature that portrays Chinese Americans as docile and politically indifferent, my findings have shown the active participation of New York's Chinese in local and national political campaigns, particularly their engagement in the 1933 election for the New York City government and in the 1932 and 1936 presidential

elections. Their endorsement of Fiorello H. La Guardia as Mayor and of Franklin D. Roosevelt as President characterized their political consciousness and maturity.

In addition to the Depression, the Second World War generated the momentum to push change forward. Findings of my research in Chapter V and in Chapter VI particularly stress the development of a dual ethnic identity of Chinese New Yorkers. Their participation in support of China's defense against Japan's invasion during the 1930's and their activities endorsing the American war effort after the Pearl Harbor attack demonstrated their nationalistic passion for their home land, as well as their patriotic zeal for the country where they were born but alienated. During the years of supporting China against Japan's invasion, New York's Chinese not only provided millions of dollars for civilian relief work, but also sent well-trained military personnel to fight along with their compatriots in China. Many died for the freedom of China. However, we can not simply look to their Chinese ancestry as a way to justify their support. More importantly, they considered their role to "guide American actions to maintain world peace." They were not simply fighting for China. Instead they "fought for the United States," and appealed for global peace as Americans. Therefore, dual ethnic identity is a more accurate explanation of support for China.

Evidence that demonstrated this dual ethnic identity was

also presented in their support for the United States after the Pearl Harbor attack. An estimated 4,000 Chinese New Yorkers were drafted. Ninety died for the United States. In addition to military service, New York's Chinese participated in other activities of fund-raising, war bonds purchase and blood donation for the war front. They also participated in wartime production on the home front as a way to claim themselves as Americans and achieve racial equality. I stress that in joining the war as Americans, New York's Chinese continuously endorsed China's efforts against Japan after Pearl Harbor. As I have shown, the New York Chinatown Naval Academy was established during this time and Chinese American pilots served the Flying Tigers of the United States' Fourteenth Air Force to China.

This dual identity reflected a radical interior transformation in Chinese New Yorkers' self-definition that contributed to their intensified efforts for racial equality.

The participation of New York's Chinese, particularly the engagement of the younger generation in cultural activities, as I have shown in Chapter III, demonstrated their self-consciousness of being Chinese Americans. This dual sense of identity encouraged them to participate in activities that reinforced Chinese cultural heritage while promoting confidence in being Americans. Activities such as Chinese language learning, essay contests that stressed the future of Americans-born Chinese in the United States, and outreach

through art performances and sports once again characterized the political maturity of New York's Chinese to be part of American society.

The repeal of the Exclusion legislation proved perhaps the most important consequence of their varied efforts to integrate as American citizens and to claim racial equality. Again dissenting from accepted scholarship, I argue that New York's Chinese played a crucial role in changing American attitudes towards them. Their demand for racial equality and their participation in the repeal movement, as shown in their petition to the government, fund-raising in support of lobbying in Congress, and testimony before the House hearings, eventually brought an end to the Chinese exclusion laws. The Chinese Women's Association of New York played an unusual role to initiate the petition. The repeal efforts of New York's Chinese once again demonstrated their political maturity.

The participation of New York's Chinese in political, cultural, and social activities laid the groundwork for future involvement and fundamentally altered the traditional means by which social control had once been exercised. American-born Chinese were major participants in these activities. They functioned as a dynamic element to reconstruct a newly structured ethnic community that integrated into society. College students, represented by some of the organizations such as the Chinese

Students League of Greater New York and the Chinese Student Christian Association, played an important role in the transformation of the Chinese community as they redefined themselves and turned their attention to the welfare of their community. They helped to overcome the isolation and exclusionary atmosphere of New York's Chinese community.

Chinese New Yorkers' active participation in mainstream activities during the Depression and the war contributed to Americans' changing image of them. Nevertheless, racial prejudice and discrimination still haunt the Chinese. Chinese Americans continue to fight for justice, freedom, and equality as citizens and as people proud of their ethnic heritage. With decades of increasingly successful integration behind them, they are more assured than before.

I hope that my study will contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which the Depression and war were experienced by minority groups who have suffered racial prejudice. Cheryl Lynn Greenberg's book on the experiences of blacks in Harlem in the Great Depression provides another dimension to this aspect of our nation's history.

"Racism created and perpetuated Harlem's poverty- race and class were inextricably linked in the black experience. Yet segregation and discrimination also produced strong social and political networks within the black community. These served not only to meet immediate needs, but also to mobilize thousands to demand a better life. This

activism, both organized and spontaneous, demonstrated that a determined people could win effective improvements in their condition."⁴⁷⁷

What Greenberg summarizes also applies to Chinese Americans in New York. Chinese Americans have different cultural traditions and very different histories in the United States from African Americans. But they shared comparable experiences of racial prejudice and discrimination and responded similarly in that they did not passively accept designations of racial inferiority. Chinese Americans in New York used a variety of tactics, as I have shown, to challenge racism and change attitudes. This struggle for racial equality and against prejudice continues. Further studies of this aspect of our past should help in illuminating the complexity of group experiences.

⁴⁷⁷ Cherly Lynn Greenberg, "Or Does It Explode?": Black Harlem in the Great Depression (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 6

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